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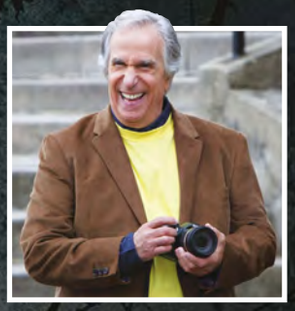
YOUR NEW GUIDE TO INDEPENDENT FILMMAKING

Ask the filmmaker
Professional Sean J Hughes tackles all of your questions

Devil in the detail
How bad luck and a mortgage deposit helped make a film

Moving pictures
The student documentary that became a media hit

Too cool for school
Henry Winkler and Matt Bloom on the making of Hank Zipzer



Taking a hit
Actor Mark Noyce on being both a producer and writer

The digital age
Why having the right kit can make all the difference



Q&A
Raindance Film Festival founder Elliot Grove looks back on the success of this evergreen annual event

THE BORDERLANDS
From concept to creation: film producer Jen Handorf takes us behind the scenes of this chilling but comedic tale...

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KIT TO GET STARTED



SONY A6000

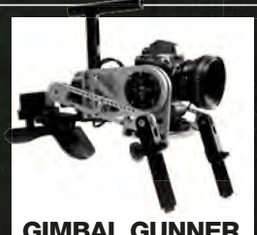

COMODO ORBIT



PANASONIC GH4



BLACKMAGIC 4K


GIMBAL GUNNER



CANON 1200D

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Welcome to DIGITAL FilmMaker

ISSUE 13, MARCH 2014

Although most of us are having to work with increasingly tight budgets at the moment, there's nothing like seeing the filmmaking industry making some great progress here in the UK. A couple of weeks ago I had first-hand experience of that at the Broadcast Video Expo in London. Held over three days at the end of February, this event not only showcases loads of new kit and the companies behind it, but is a great place to network with filmmakers. If you couldn't make it yourself then head on over to page 38 to get a taste of what was on offer.

Flicking through the impressive show guide on the way home, it was clear to see that there's lots going on, particularly when it comes to kit options. While there's still plenty of high-end equipment out there that will quickly hoover all of the money out of your current account, I'm really pleased to see that making a film with good quality budget gear is now easier than ever.

What's more, the results are becoming all the more impressive, as we see on a regular basis here at DFM. Add to that something like the tempting new 4K Panasonic Lumix GH4 and you've got huge potential at your fingertips and all without breaking the bank. The Japanese manufacturer says the GH4 has removed the gap between consumer and professional video cameras. And that, fellow filmmakers, is very good news indeed.



Editor



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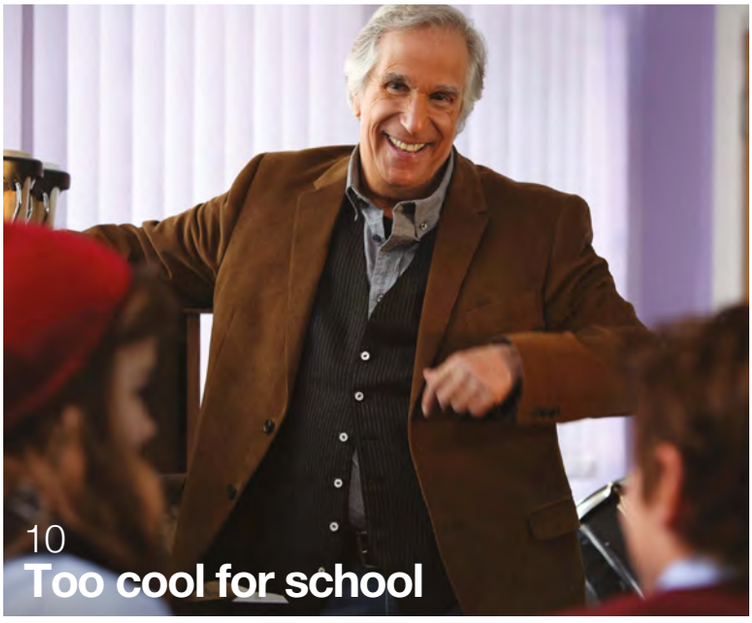
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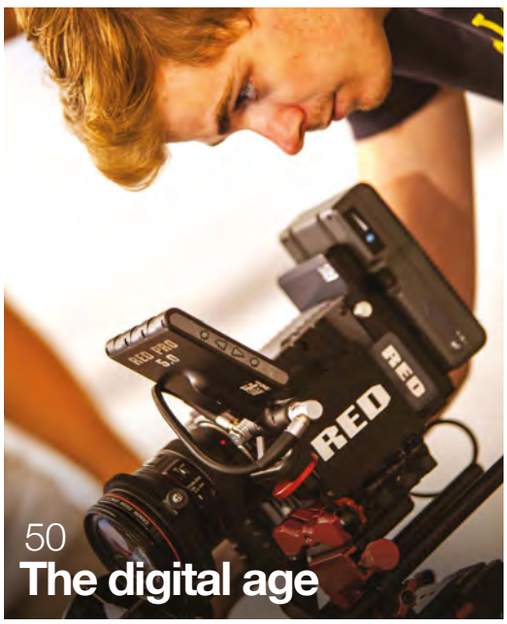
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news

The lowdown on latest developments from the world of digital video

PANASONIC GH4 'BRINGS 4K VIDEO RECORDING TO THE MASSES'





Billed as "the ultimate interchangeable lens camera changing the boundaries of professional photography and videography", the pioneering new Panasonic Lumix GH4 certainly has a lot to boast about. The most advanced Lumix camera the manufacturer has produced to date; the recently unveiled GH4 features a host of newly engineered technologies, with crystal-clear 4K video recording capability headlining its extensive list of high-end specifications.

The compact, lightweight yet rugged GH4 is primarily aimed at professionals that prefer to work out in the field, with an improved 16.5-megapixel Live MOS sensor and Venus Engine processor, along with a fast, precise AF system that all combine with a weather-resistant body to deliver the perfect package for shooting in all manner of conditions. The newly developed sensor promises high-quality, high-sensitivity image recording with approximately 50 per cent higher speed signal readout too when compared to the Lumix DMC-GH3, at the same time as avoiding the rolling shutter effect when using the electronic shutter. A new Random Filter for noise reduction has also been included, enabling clean, detailed results even in low light and at the maximum sensitivity level of ISO 25600.



An impressive quad-core CPU ensures the camera can achieve the high-speed signal processing that is required for rich video recording in 4K, while resolution has been improved by applying a newly designed processing routine, which allows natural edge processing to subtly render details, such as hair, extremely accurately. Furthermore, the GH4's slick 49-point Contrast AF system has been further enhanced by the integration of DFD (Depth from Defocus) technology, which shortens the time to set focus and enables an ultra-high-speed AF performance of approximately 0.07 seconds. Alongside Face Recognition AF and manual options, newly incorporated Eye Detection AF further improves the accuracy of the system overall.

In terms of 4K movie recording, the addition of filming in MOV/MP4 enables videographers to realise their creative visions in Ultra HD resolution, with high-quality sound in LPCM (Linear Pulse Code Modulation) or AAC, as well as selectable system frequencies between 59.94Hz (23.98Hz) / 50.00Hz / 24.00Hz. The LUMIX GH4 is also capable of full HD video with an ultra-high bitrate at 200 Mbps (ALL-Intra) or 100 Mbps (IPB), with further options for shooting in AVCHD Progressive and AVCHD formats. With VFR (Variable Frame Rate), video can be recorded in both dramatic slow-motion and fast-motion - such as 96 Fps or 4x speed - all in Full HD. There's scope for stop-motion and timelapse recording too, plus plenty of nifty options for creating cinematic results. See our review over on page 100.

www.panasonic.co.uk

GETTING GRIPPY

Canon has unveiled its successor to the highly successful PowerShot G1 X: the new PowerShot G1 X Mark II Enhanced Grip Edition. Promising 'DSLR-like' image quality and handling in a portable package, the camera builds on the best attributes of its predecessor, while incorporating new, even more advanced capabilities based on consumer feedback. The PowerShot boasts a stainless steel chassis and an all-aluminium exterior, incorporating a large ergonomically-shaped grip for comfortable, secure handling. Inside, the G1 X Mark II offers a large 1.5-inch Canon CMOS sensor that provides over twice the surface area of conventional 1-inch sensor competitors. Its large size enables it to deliver images imbued with a shallow depth-of-field comparable to that offered by an APS-C model. The new sensor configuration also allows the camera to adapt and make full use of the entire lens image circle, whether recording in 3:2 ratio at 12.8-megapixels or 4:3 ratio at 13.1-megapixels. Its new f2.2-3.9 lens covers a focal range equivalent to 24-120mm on a 35mm camera, making it a fast, versatile optic that's ideal for a wide





range of applications, from low-light shooting to creative close-ups with beautiful bokeh. An improved AiAF system now includes 31 high-density AF points with wide coverage across the frame for greater accuracy, while fully-customisable Dual Len Control Rings enhance the camera's handling. Ergonomically positioned Step and Continuous rings allow for fast, precise control of parameters such as zoom, aperture and shutter speed.

A 3-inch LCD touchscreen adds another easy-to-use option when altering settings, as well as affording a clear view of the scene before the lens while shooting and when reviewing stills and movies. The camera also incorporates a hotshoe allowing accessories to be attached. Canon's latest DIGIC 6 processor is up to 2.4x faster than its predecessor, enabling the G1 X Mark II to deliver cleaner stills and movies at the same time as offering a 56 per cent reduction in overall shutter lag for faster continuous shooting along with the enablement of features such as Background Defocus and handheld HDR. Full HD movies (1920 x 1080, 30p) with stereo sound can be recorded at the touch of a button, with an optical zoom function and Canon's superb HS System helping to produce the best possible results. Wi-Fi and NFC also allow easy remote control of the G1 X Mark II, plus wireless file sharing and back-up on-the-go. The PowerShot G1 X Mark II will be available from May at an SRP of £749. For more details see **www.canon.co.uk**

STABILITY PUT ON AUTOPILOT

ProAm USA, a South Carolina-based manufacturer of production equipment for film and video production, has introduced new camera stabilisers for DSLR, compact and HD video cameras: the Autopilot and Autopilot Lite. Priced at $89.99 (approximately £53.92) and $189.99 (approximately £113.83) respectively, the latest models from the manufacturer are ideal tools for the budget-conscious videographer who doesn't want to sacrifice practicality or build quality. The aluminium Lite version of the product has a maximum load capacity of 2.27kg and weighs just 1.36kg itself, making it a useful, highly-portable solution to camera stabilisation when filming on-location. Step up from the Lite to the fully-fledged Autopilot and the load capacity increases to 3.6kg, with a maximum height of 57cm and a precision 3-axis bearing gimbal for smooth, steady footage. For additional information or to discover more filming solutions from ProAm USA, visit them over at **www.ProAmUSA.com**



Hedler gets tough

The new Hedler DX-25 HMI Light is billed as "The most compact and lightweight 'One-Piece' HMI light in its class." The unit benefits from a tough aluminium construction, 250W metal halogen lamp (equivalent to 1000W Tungsten), 1,000 hour operating lamp life, 4200 Lux intensity and flicker-free output balance at approximately 5600-K. there's built-in ballast for added stability, a huge range of accessories available to modify and shape the light omitted, plus the fact that there's no noisy fan in the head means that it's an ideal choice for situations where crystal-clear sound recording is paramount. Available now in a variety of different kit configurations, pricing for the Hedler DX-25 HMI (bundled with Safety glass, 250 W/SE M/H lamp, U-Bracket with Quick-Lock Light Stand Attachment 5/8 inch and built-in Electronic Ballast) starts at £910.80.



Blackmagic Design adds more 4K

Featuring a super high-resolution, the new Blackmagic Design Production Camera 4K is ideal for Ultra HD television work. Incorporating a large Super 35 sensor, professional global shutter, as well as EF and ZE compatible lens mount, the new model is capable of recording high-quality ProRes files giving users a versatile solution for capturing high-resolution music videos, episodic television productions, commercials, sport and documentaries. The camera kit also includes a built in SSD recorder, rechargeable battery and a large 5-inch LCD touchscreen. In addition to focusing and monitoring shots, the touchscreen lets customers enter metadata and change camera settings all on a single very easy-to-use interface.

"The support from the creative community for the Blackmagic Cinema Camera and Production Camera 4K has been amazing," said CEO Grant Petty. "As with all of our products, we work hard in production to reduce costs so we can pass along the savings, even to our first Blackmagic Production Camera 4K customers. The Blackmagic Production Camera 4K is a perfect companion for ATEM Production 4K switchers and we hope competitive pricing will help more customers to expand their Ultra HD live production setups with even more adventurous camera angles!"

Buyers also get a full copy of DaVinci Resolve for professional quality colour grading and finishing for Mac OS X and Windows computers. Read our overview of the camera on page 106 and check out full specifications via the BMD site at **www.blackmagicdesign.com**





FUJIFILM DEBUTS GROUNDBREAKING X-T1

Grabbing the headlines with credentials like the 'world's fastest real-time Viewfinder' and 'world's highest magnification ratio', Fujifilm's latest interchangeable lens camera has certainly caught our attention. The latest addition to the award-winning X-Series range of cameras boasts what Fujifilm terms as SLR-style handling, with mechanical dials and a robust, weather-resistant design in a compact body. In spite of its portable size, the X-T1 packs in plenty of high-end technologies, not least its unique wide-angle view, world's highest magnification (0.77x) electronic viewfinder. Fujifilm is keen to point out that the display speed of the viewfinder is what particularly sets it apart from the competition, with an almost imperceptible lag-time of just 0.005sec - one tenth the speed of conventional digital cameras. This means that - combined with its crisp 2.36m-dot resolution OLED display - the EVF is capable of delivering an immersive shooting experience that closely mimics the performance of a traditional optical viewfinder. As if that wasn't enough, a newly-designed Graphic User Interface lets you keep tabs on your current settings at a glance: a trick that can't be performed by a conventional optical viewfinder - along with a split view for accurate manual focusing or Focus Peak Highlight.

Racking up another record-busting feature, the X-T1 also lays claim to the 'world's fastest AF speed' title, with its EXR Processor II and 16.3-megapixel APS-C X-Trans CMOS II sensor working in tandem to drive the camera's slick performance. On-sensor phase detection AF produces a world-beating AF response of 0.08secs, with the EXR Processor II delivering a speedy 0.5sec start-up time, 0.05sec shutter lag and 0.5sec shooting interval, as well as continuous shooting at up to 8fps with tracking AF. It's also the first ever model to be compatible with SDXC UHS-II format memory cards, allowing users to truly capitalise on the camera's high-speed performance.

Slim and stylish, the X-T1 is also tough, boasting a weather-resistant die-cast magnesium body with 80 points of weather-sealing to guard against moisture and dust ingress. It's also freeze-proof to -10-degrees Celsius. The optional extra Vertical Battery Grip (VG-XT1) is just as robustly constructed, plus Fujifilm is launching three weather-resistant zoom lenses to complement the X-T1, with the first (XF18-135mm) set to become available in June. The X-T1 itself is now available at a starting SRP of £1,099.99 (body only). With too many high-end features to list in detail here - including Full HD movie recording, a tempered glass tilting LCD, geotagging, Wi-Fi, in-camera Raw conversion, film simulation modes and much more besides - you can get the full specification by heading to **www.fujifilm.co.uk**

Video-friendly Canon EOS 1200D launched

First-time DSLR owners are offered the facility to capture impressive results straight out of the box with the new Canon EOS 1200D. Seamlessly combining the company's world class imaging system with a streamlined, accessible interface and ergonomic design, the latest entry-level EOS camera promises high-quality filming whatever your skill level. A new EOS companion app for mobile devices and an easy to navigate quick start guide make it simple to get to grips with the camera's control layout and features, so users can get shooting right away. The EOS 1200D boasts an array of user-friendly features, including Scene Intelligent Auto, Video Snapshot and Creative Filters that ensure top-quality stills and movies at the touch of a button.

The camera's 18.0-megapixel APS-C CMOS sensor and Canon's DIGIC 4 processor combine with a 9-point AF system to deliver a slick overall performance, with continuous shooting speeds up to 3 fps and Full HD (1080p) video on hand to help you capture the action. Automatic functions take the stress out of filming to begin with, although users can take control over exposure, focus and sound levels as their skills progress. A unique twist can also be added using the EOS 1200D's array of Creative Filters, with artistic styles such as Toy Camera and Miniature available to add distinctive looks to your creations. Available from March, the EOS 1200D carries an SRP of £349.99 (body only). See our enthusiastic review on page 98 or head to the Canon website at **www.canon.co.uk**



THE ZOOM FACTOR

Sony's new Cyber-shot H400 takes the versatility of the superzoom to a new level, with a colossal 63x optical zoom with SteadyShot, 20.1-megapixel sensor, DSLR-esque styling, high-quality electronic viewfinder and a dedicated movie button for fast access to its HD movie mode. The unprecedented level of magnification offered by the H400's lens is equivalent to 24.5-1550mm on a 35mm camera, bringing distant subjects closer than ever before. Optical SteadyShot combines with ergonomic styling to ensure comfortable, jitter-free handling and easy operation, while an automatic feature such as Intelligent Auto helps to take the guesswork out of shooting scenarios. The latter option enables the H400 to recognise a variety of different scenes and quickly adjust the relevant settings to make the best of the situation, freeing up the user to concentrate on their subject. The H400 goes on sale from April. Get more details over at **www.sony.co.uk**



SONY DELIVERS SUPERFAST A6000

Sony has announced the latest addition to their popular mirrorless interchangeable lens camera line-up: the speedy new A6000. With the camera's fast Hybrid AF system claiming the title of 'world's fastest amongst interchangeable lens cameras' the newcomer promises to be one of the manufacturer's most responsive cameras to date, with an AF response time of 0.06sec and a wide AF coverage area of 179 focal points. Inside there's a 24.3-megapixel Exmor APS HD CMOS sensor featuring a gapless on-chip design, plus Sony's latest BIONZ X processor for professional quality stills and gloriously detailed Full HD video. The lightweight, compact design also prioritises user-friendliness, with accessible controls, a built-in flash and OLED Tru-Finder, plus added extras like Wi-Fi and NFC connectivity for one-touch sharing or remote control from your mobile device. This powerful little performer is set to go on sale in April, but take a closer look at it over on page 99 of this issue. You can pre-order yours now from **www.sony.co.uk**



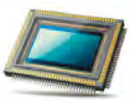
TRIGGER-HAPPY INFRARED FILMING

The new TriggerScout PIR Kit is a long-range infrared heat sensing device that lets users capture images of sensitive subjects or shoot remotely from awkward angles and perspectives that might prove tricky for a person to manoeuvre into. A passive infrared sensor built into the device detects moving heat sources up to 20 metres away and can be rigged either to trigger the camera immediately, or hooked up to a remote control to allow the user to determine when to start recording. Users can fine-tune the sensitivity of the sensor, the range of the IR cone and set a trigger delay time if desired. Along with the sensor itself, the whole kit contains a Stakepod, weatherproof cover, a 3 metre cable (3.5mm to 2.5mm), a jack adapter (2.5mm to 3.5mm) and a 6-degree PIR baffle, all for £118.80.



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TOO COOL FOR SCHOOL



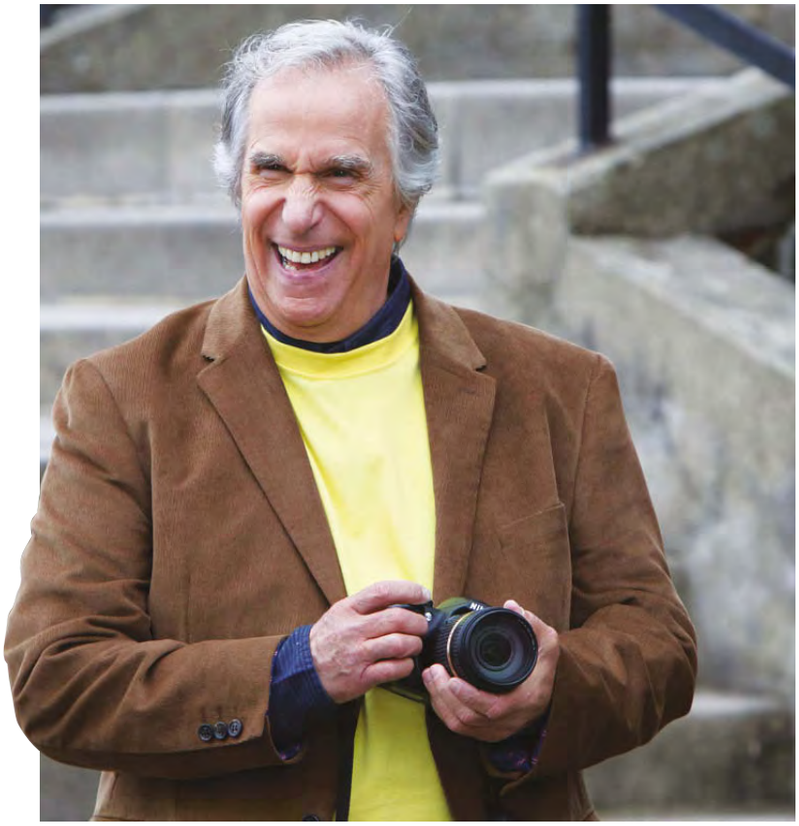


What's it like to work with a professional actor like Henry 'The Fonz' Winkler? Filmmaker Matt Bloom recently found out while directing Hank Zipzer: The World's Greatest Underachiever for CBBC

Hank Zipzer is CBBC's major new adaptation of Henry 'The Fonz' Winkler's phenomenally best-selling book series Hank Zipzer: The World's Greatest Underachiever. The books, based on Henry's own experiences as a young boy growing up with dyslexia, are fast-paced and funny, and the 13-part series follows the everyday life of 12-year-old Hank Zipzer, a young man with a unique perspective on the world. It's a story about a boy whose glass is half-full - he just spills it everywhere.

Winkler plays music teacher Mr Rock (Henry's real life teacher) alongside newcomer Nick James as Hank, Felicity Montagu (Lynn from Alan Partridge, Nighty Night, Bridget Jones's Diary) as Hank's teacher Miss Adolf, Neil Fitzmaurice (Phoenix Nights, Peep Show), Juliet Cowan (Shameless), Vincenzo Nicoli (Black Books) and Nick Mohammed (Sorry I've Got No Head).

Here then, in a worldwide exclusive interview, we talk to its creator and star Henry Winkler, along with director Matt Bloom, about the working relationship between director and actor. The show is wholly based around Henry's series of



EXCLUSIVE! INTERVIEW WITH HENRY WINKLER

books, which must be a great feeling. Unsurprisingly, the actor sounds duly chuffed… "One of the greatest surprises in my professional life was to actually hold the very first Hank Zipzer: The World's Greatest Underachiever book in my hand, hot off the press," Henry reflects. "My partner Lin Oliver and I tried for years to make Hank Zipzer into the TV series we knew it could be. Year after year we were unsuccessful here in America. It took five English women, all of whom said 'Leave it with me' to get this funny, heart-warming, emotional, family dream onto CBBC. It was a fantastic whirlwind created by amazing women from Walker Productions, Kindle Entertainment and CBBC, all of whom came together to make 'Hank' happen. I've learnt that when a woman from the UK says 'Leave it to me', she really means it and one better get out of the way! An amazing cast and crew gathered together and created a delightful experience from start to finish. I can't wait for the viewers to start watching. It is, in a word, overwhelming and gratifying... Whoops, that's two words."

However, the series takes place in London as opposed to New York where they were originally situated… "Hank Zipzer is a universal character," says an unconcerned Henry while making a good point. "His problems at school, with his family, and the bully are universal. So where the show is set doesn't bother me in the least."

A living document

Making the show all the more credible is the fact that it was based around Henry's own experiences with dyslexia when we was growing up… "This series is certainly inspired by my childhood and the experiences I had, because I learned differently to other people," he explains.

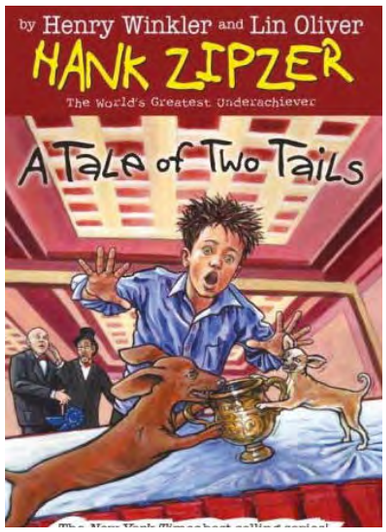




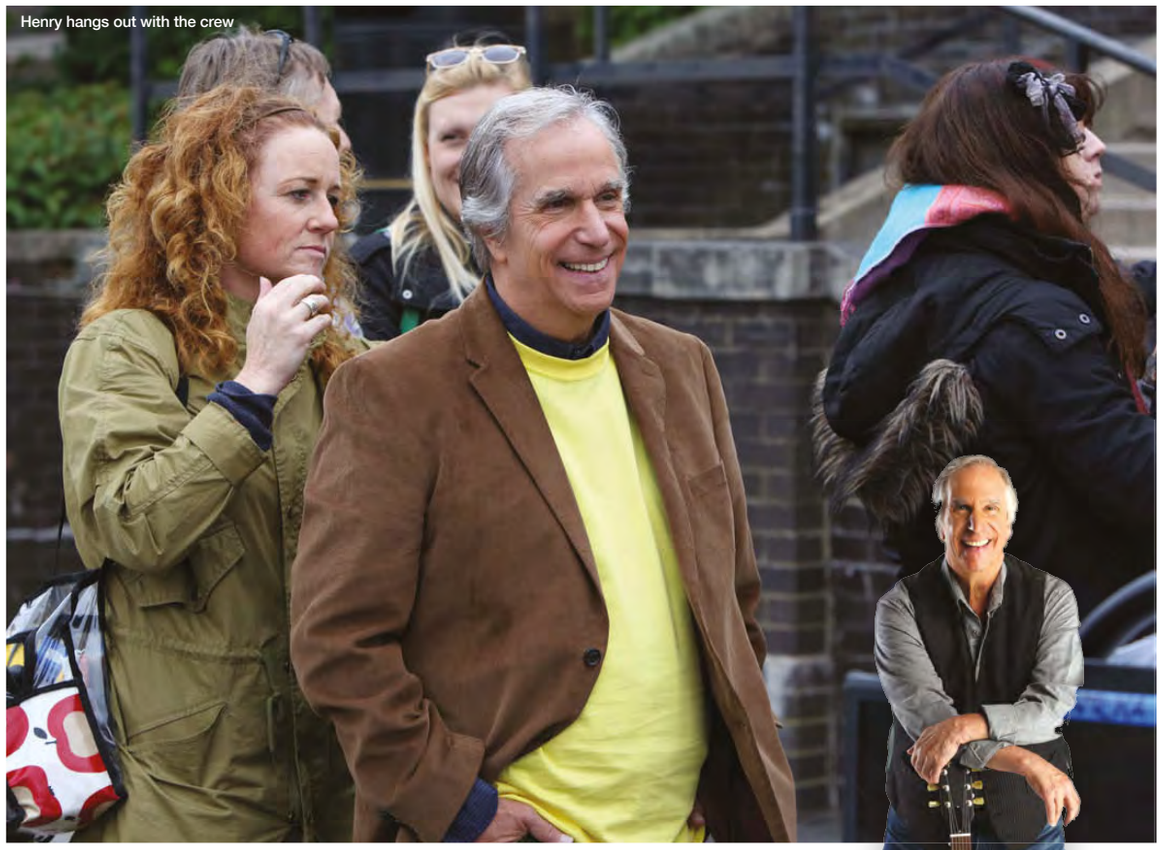


Henry Winkler and Matt Bloom on set

"But it's a comedy first. The emotion is completely relatable but we exaggerate the humour. When I was young, teachers and other people used to tell me I'd never achieve anything because I was in the bottom three per cent academically in America. I never thought I'd be able to write books, let alone have them made into a TV show. Outside of having my children, the Hank Zipzer series makes me incredibly proud."



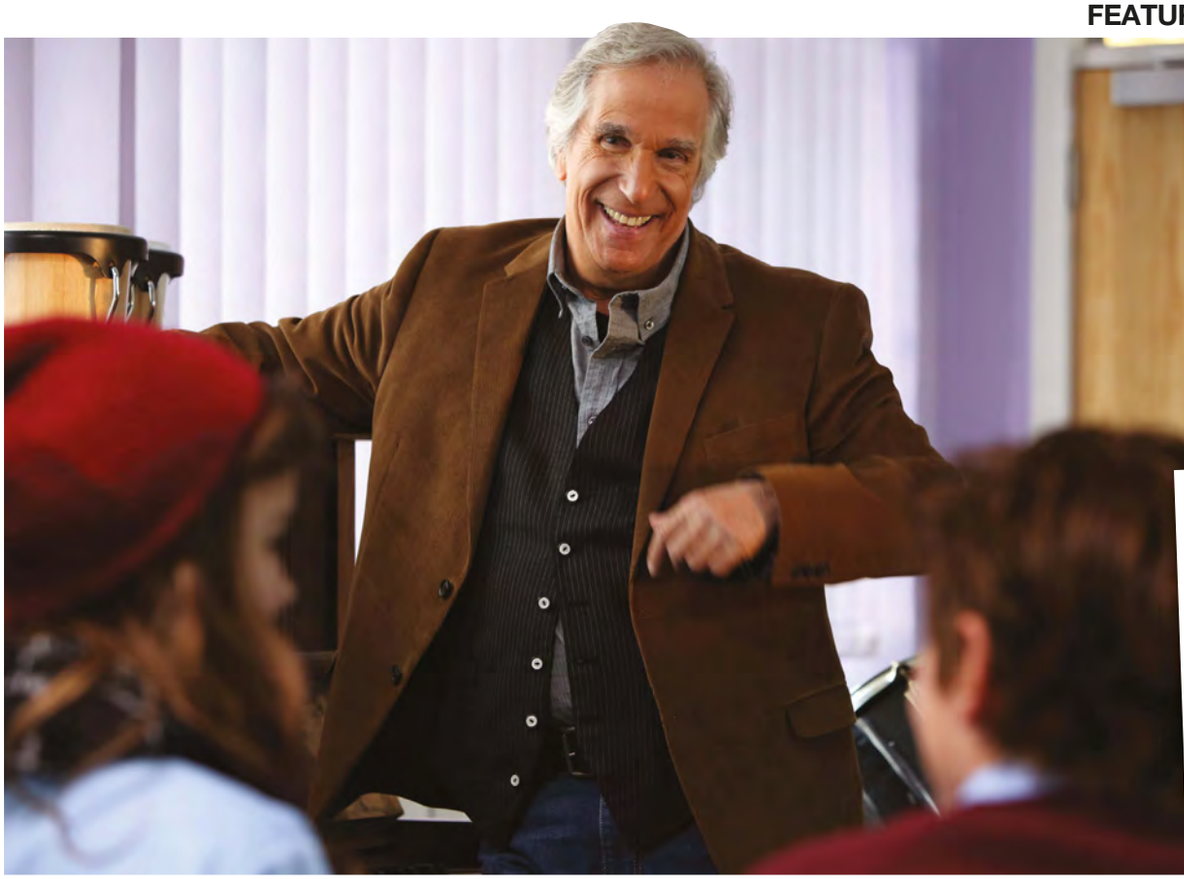
In Hank Zipzer, Winkler plays the character of Mr Rock, which again has echoes back to his own childhood days spent at school… "Mr Rock was the one teacher who really supported me and saw that I had potential. I still remember the day he took me aside and said: 'Winkler, when you leave here you're going to be okay'. And he was right. I still hold that close to my heart now. He was a real inspiration to me and it's wonderful to be able to play him in the series. Mr Rock is a real friend to Hank, as well as being his teacher, and I think viewers will enjoy their often-mischievous relationship."


Henry hangs out with the crew

Although the production is set in London, it was actually filmed in Halifax, but the experience sounds like a positive one all things considered… "From the minute I walked on the set in Halifax, in the north of England, I was welcomed as a family member," Henry enthuses. "Because my time was so limited to shoot such a large amount of material, there was no time for anybody to be less than professional. The crew worked fast!"

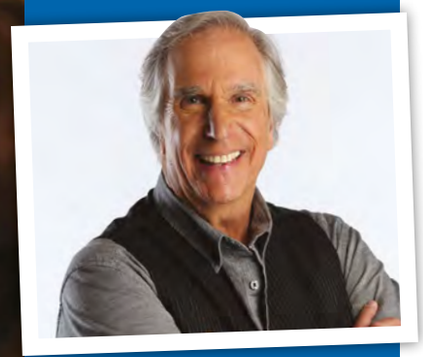


And, luckily, the actor hit it off just fine with the other members of the cast… "Oh my goodness, they were all incredible!" he says. "I never dreamed that a group of people could work so well together. Nick (James, 12-years-old) who plays Hank is such a talented young actor. When I'm acting I often improvise and take things off in a different direction, which sometimes throws off other actors around me - even the ones that have been doing the job for years. But not Nick. Nick was wonderful. He would just come with me and we'd create these amazing moments between Hank and Mr Rock. Unbelievable. Felicity Montagu plays Miss Adolf, who was actually a teacher in my



HANK ZIPZER FACTFILE:

- Over 1,000 children were considered and auditioned for the part of Hank Zipzer
- The show was shot in 4K resolution on the RED Epic so close-up footage of improvisation could be created digitally from wide shots



- The show often used the Canon 5D and Go-Pro Hero 3 to capture action sequences
- The London-based show was actually shot in Halifax, using digital landscapes
- Production company Kindle Entertainment relentlessly pursued Henry for four years for the rights to the books
- Hank Zipzer is one of the first shows to debut on iPlayer a week before its actual broadcast on CBBC
- The show includes many 2D hand-drawn style animations by Bristol based animators Hi-Sim
- Composers Oli Julian and Nick Foster previously worked on the excellent scores for Cardinal Burns and Derren Brown's Apocalypse

"From the minute I walked on the set in Halifax, in the north of England, I was welcomed as a family member" - Henry Winkler

school too. She was nothing like Mr Rock. She was mean, and had this horrible grey skin…grey personality…grey breath. Felicity brings her to life in such an incredible way. She's the yin to Mr Rock's yang and it was such fun to work with her."

A long way from home

Filming in Halifax could be seen to be a long way from working on a show like Arrested Development in the US. Being a producer himself, Henry is all too familiar with the challenges facing filmmakers, no matter if it's here, across the pond or anywhere else in the world for that matter… "Every show, no matter where it is being shot, has its own unique set of problems," he considers. "But one thing remains universally the same. The show has to be completed in the amount of time given!"

So does the actor have a method for getting into character? And does he think his method differs from most of the British actors he worked with on Hank Zipzer? "Each character is so different," reckons Henry. "My instinct lets me know if I can play them and my instinct helps me develop them. The craft of acting has got to be the same worldwide. Any character has to be identifiable and relatable."

And from a directional point of view, seeing as we're going to be hearing from Matt Bloom himself in the next section of this feature, one wonders how Mr Winkler likes to be directed… "A director has to have a point of view," says Henry on the subject. "A director has to have a vision for the telling of the story. In that structure, the actor can be free to create the relationships within the particular piece you are doing. For me, a director should understand the human condition, have a sense of humour, be strong enough to defend their vision, and talk in short sentences. On Hank Zipzer, our directors and producers always took the time to listen. I could not have asked for a better working environment. And my bonus prize was that everyone on both sides of the camera was absolutely delightful and talented."



It hasn't always been that way, naturally, and, from time to time, Henry has experienced less joyous directorial instruction over the years... "What I have found less



than useful was a dictatorial mish-mash of words that contained no useful or emotional alternative to the previous take," he adds, matter of factly.

Star qualities

What would he say to any first time feature/TV filmmakers who find themselves lucky enough to work with a very well known actor on their project? "No matter what celebrity an actor comes with, they still have the obligation of helping you create the agreed upon vision for the piece," he considers. "The tricky part is when the celebrity comes with an ego that is bigger than the comedy or drama can handle. Then the director has to be a psychologist, a parent, a negotiator, and a traffic cop in order to soothe the 'ego beast' and still get at least 75-80 per cent of what they want. Just like raising a child, it takes a village to make a piece of entertainment."

Viewers will probably remember him best for his role as The Fonz in Happy Days and it's not something Henry Winkler minds one little bit… "Absolutely not, it's lovely for me to see how different people remember different things I've done," he enthuses. "The kids who watch the show will probably only know me as an author and now, hopefully, as Mr Rock!"



VIEW FROM THE OTHER SIDE...

Director Matt Bloom explains what it was like to work on Hank Zipzer…

Meanwhile, over on the other side of the camera was Matt Bloom, the director who is going from strength-to-strength and who must rate this as one of his most ambitious, not to mention high-profile jobs to date. How, one wonders, did such a juicy production come along… "I'd been lead director on The 4 O'Clock Club, starring the rapper and stand-up Doc Brown, for CBBC," he explains. "The show went on to win a Bafta and Royal television Society award nominations, so CBBC asked me to start off their new project, Hank Zipzer."

Presumably there must be an additional buzz due to being involved with the production from the very beginning… "Often directors in television are hired very late in the production when the scripts are almost finalised," Matt says. "And, if it's a long running show, the camera style and tone of the acting is already set. So one of the joys of being the director right from the start of a project is that you get to really put your creative stamp on a show. You're there from the earliest casting, and get to shape the scripts and visual tone of the show. There's also a lot of creative pressure as you're setting in stone decisions that will affect a show hopefully for years to come."

Bloom is also confident that Hank Zipzer is a step apart from, well, any other show you care to mention… "In each episode you get the chance to really climb inside the mind of this brilliant, creative, dyslexic young man," he furthers. "So visually, our camerawork is restless and wild, and we mix animation with live action to show his struggles with everyday life. And we hope this is a programme that's shown internationally, so we aimed for our style to be a modern, exciting, funny and emotionally truthful family show."

What's more, making children's television has proved to be a truly creative area that has been more inspiring that some other sections of the business right now… "Some of the finest and most creative television in this country at the moment is being produced for children's TV," states the filmmaker. "You really have to go to the highest budget jewel-in-the-crown adult



primetime shows like Sherlock to find as much directorial freedom and creativity, and also storytelling trust in the audience. On the downside, there are heavy restrictions in the number of hours you can work with kids on set, and young performers are often technically unfocused. But this is far outweighed by the fact that they're amazing bundles of creative energy, have no ego at all (yet!), they're willing to collaborate, they haven't picked up any bad acting habits. And, if you cast right, they're utterly truthful and in-the-moment. In fact, when I'm casting adult actors, I always look for the same kind of creative free spirits and lack of ego you often find in child performers."

Professional edge

Similarly, working with Henry Winkler must also have been a blast… "There's nothing worse than interviews where the director or producer mindlessly praises the star, and then you can imagine them muttering expletives under the breath afterwards," laughs the director. "But it's the truth that Henry was an utter joy to work with. He's renowned for being one of the nicest men in Hollywood. For some reason he's managed to come out the other side of massive fame (I mean, the man came to define a noun: 'Cool'!) without the hint of ego or preciousness. On our shoot, he stood at the back of the line in the lunch queue, and often advised our young cast and extras. But, most importantly, he was a true collaborator. He'd work deeply with the other actors to improve the scene, and was always approachable with my directions."

It's no secret that some actors can be, well, a little awkward but Mr Winkler was just the opposite, which makes the job a whole lot easier…

"What I'm looking for on set is an actor that simply wants to collaborate," says Matt, underlining Henry's versatility and willingness to be part of the team. "I don't want a puppet, but I also don't want someone who believes their opinion is more important than everybody else's. Henry would always listen and take directions, but also intelligently, politely, and passionately fight for something if he disagreed. That's a perfect actor in my mind."

And, if you've seen his work on something like Arrested Development, you'll also know just how spontaneous and off-the-cuff this actor can be. Something Winkler used to good effect on this production too… "It's no fluke that he's as successful as he is," says Matt. "He has the creativity and energy of a teenager. And there's a huge link between Henry and our character Hank, who struggles with academia because of his dyslexia, but his unique brain finds extraordinarily creative solutions to overcome his problems. On set, Henry would often riff like a stand-up comedian around the dialogue, and always come up with an absolute jewel of an improvisation that would make the scene. Improvisation makes editing and continuity complex, but when you have someone as talented as that, you really don't care."



Peer pressure

That said, the fact that this story comes from Henry's own experiences did help to lend an added pressure to proceedings in order to honour his vision… "Absolutely," agrees Matt. "We were not only representing Henry's books, but also his childhood! You can tell how passionately he felt about these issues by the fact he named the villain 'Miss Adolf'! Henry tours schools around the world talking about dyslexia, and spreading the message that every kid can achieve. We really wanted to get that spirit across in the show."

So does working with someone with this level of fame change the way he works with an actor? "One of the biggest lessons you can learn in this industry is to identify who has the power on a film or show…and more than that: who can't be fired!" says the director. "That person holds the most power. Most directors wish it was them, but often it's an executive, or a writer/showrunner, and more often a lead star. Obviously, having a star means they hold the power to have final say in any creative discussion. Especially, in Henry's case, when the project is based on his books and his own childhood. But you wouldn't be doing your job as a director correctly if you were sycophantic and submissive. So the best you can hope for is a star without ego, and someone who'll listen to an intelligent creative discussion."

And, now that Matt has had the chance to work with such a professional, well-known actor, he's quick to underline something that all actors bring with them to the table. If you're a filmmaker and after a star for your project then it makes for simple, but great advice… "Every actor, no matter what their fame, is HUNGRY for a great project," he says. "They want to collaborate with brilliant writers and directors, and want to read something that excites them. So just make sure your project is something an actor would kill to be in." ■

"Some of the finest and most creative television in this country at the moment is being produced for children's TV" - Matt Bloom



Hank Zipzer is available now to watch on the BBC iPlayer service and is also broadcast regularly on CBBC. You can follow the show and the guys on Twitter at: @HankZipzerTV @hwinkler4real @MattBloomFilms

TAKING A HIT

UK-based producer, writer and actor Mark Noyce talks about his latest feature, This is Jayde: The One Hit Wonder

Mark Noyce didn't start out making films. In fact, he's been a martial arts competitor since the age of six, subsequently retiring at the ripe old age of 24. A difficult decision to make at the time, Noyce felt as though he'd reached his peak after winning numerous world titles. Fearing he lacked direction and motivation, he began auditioning for theatre work as a stuntman. The move paid off, and he followed that with acting classes, larger theatre roles and then progressed into film.

"The problem was that I was very quickly typecast and getting offered mostly fighting-based roles, which wasn't the only thing I wanted to do," he says. "I'd always enjoyed writing and had helped out on several film projects on the production side, so I guess it was inevitable that my creative side started to write stories with characters I wanted to play. Writing and creating characters was something I'd done most of my life and I saw it as a way to create opportunities.

Although I'd acted in features, I had only ever written shorts and part of a pilot sketch show. At the beginning the writing was something I just did for enjoyment and I didn't necessarily see myself moving towards it as a part of my career. The performing had always been my first love and that was what I'd originally focused most of my attention on."

Making the break

Mark eventually went on to make On the Ropes, his first film as a writer/director, which was released in 2012. An altogether different kettle of fish compared to the work he'd done before he says. "I think this is something you can't underestimate," cautions Mark. "It's a very different approach and when I made the decision to produce On the Ropes as a full-length feature I had to spend a lot of time on the script and make changes, purely because what worked as a short wouldn't necessarily work as a feature.

There are, however, plenty of rewards for making the leap and turning your hand to feature length outings… "One of the things I always used to get asked when I was working on projects, and this is both as an actor and writer, was 'where can I get your film?'," he says. "With a feature, you can get it distributed and in the stores, which for a lot of people is still the preferred format and what people are used to. I also feel that with a feature you have a good format for taking an audience on a complete journey and can hopefully get them to connect with the character over the 90 or so minutes and I find that incredibly rewarding."

Although there can also be the odd downside to the process… "The sheer scale and time it can take to finish and release a product takes a huge amount of commitment and constant drive as the results don't come as quickly as working on something like a short. Also the financing and scheduling can at times be frustrating."

Work in progress

On the Ropes was a concept Mark had started working on several years ago and had written the script





quite a while before they went into production. The film follows a documentary crew who are doing a story on a local boxer, who has just opened a gym in the area. But they get distracted when they meet the owner of a martial arts school directly across the road, who really isn't happy that he isn't the centre of attention. As a result, he'll pretty much say and do anything to take the attention away from the boxing gym.

"With my background in martial arts I'd had my fair share of funny moments and collected a lot of material over the years," says the filmmaker looking back on the project. "The film really could have been about any sport as I'm sure the politics and competitive nature of people exists in everything, but this was a world I was familiar with. I'd played the role of Keith Kraft who is the egotistical idiot martial arts instructor in a sketch show a year before and, for some reason, people really seemed to like the character."

Although Mark didn't want to leap in and just start filming willy-nilly… "We spent a month shooting test scenes and this was mainly because I wanted to be confident I had made the right decision with how I wanted it to be filmed," he adds. "I'd always envisioned it as a mock-documentary and obviously couldn't change my mind halfway through filming. I was extremely fortunate that we could do that as it highlighted a few issues and the test scenes even prompted me to make a few amendments to the script. In total, we spent 35 days filming the production and around 3 months in post."

The right people

"Selecting the right cast was absolutely critical," furthers Mark on how he pieced together the team for On the Ropes. "I really believe that, regardless of budget, poor acting is unacceptable. I think this is often one of the things that can let down lower budget productions, so I was determined that the acting needed to be good from everyone involved, and this of course means picking the right person to play the right role.

Ben Shockley played my loyal sidekick and initially this was a very small role with hardly any dialogue at all, but when we filmed a test scene the feedback was really good, so I decided to make some changes to the script and make his role larger. I completely rewrote some scenes just to include the character. For the boxing gym owner I cast Joe Egan, he was in a similar position to me where he often plays a particular role so casting him in a comedy was different for him but we did an audition and he took to the role very well. The main love interest


Director of Photography Hamdy Taha

is a very talented young actress named Emma Cargill who played the role perfectly. She was very determined to get the part and worked extremely hard preparing for her first read through."

Some of the supporting roles were cast in the traditional method of advertising and holding auditions but, notably, Mark specifically selected and approached the actors he wanted to read for the main roles. "I'd worked with Joe on a film the previous year and had mentioned the film to him so when we came to casting the role I sent him the script to see what he thought," says the filmmaker. "Joe has a history in boxing and is well known for being Mike Tyson's sparring partner, so when I sent it to him I wasn't entirely convinced how it would be received. When he got back to me, he said he wanted to be involved straight away and said that he could relate to the material.

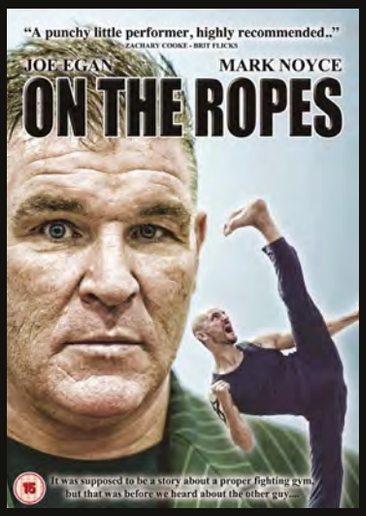
Emma had worked as an extra for me before and I knew she was interested in larger roles so gave her the opportunity to audition. All of the main cast worked with me on some test scenes before being offered the role, but this also helped with character development and getting them to interact just right. Although this was a comedy, I needed the characters to be believable as that was where the humour would come from."

One of the other things he did to help attract a good cast was to get the distribution agreement in place before they began shooting. Mark has been on the other side enough times to understand how frustrating and heartbreaking it can be to work on a project that doesn't get released and never gets seen. One guarantee he could give the cast was that their efforts wouldn't be wasted and On the Ropes would be released.

Compact and bijou

The crew for On the Ropes was relatively small in comparison to other films of its genre, but it apparently worked for Mark and his team. A production company called Frozen Echo Productions, which is headed by Hamdy Taha, collaborated with him on the entire project and having them involved really allowed him to focus most of his attention on the creative aspect of the film. "I was absolutely certain that if I was going to do a mockumentary it had to look authentic and this would directly affect which camera was going to be used and how we would shoot it," furthers the filmmaker on his kit choices. "I spent some time researching with documentary makers and seeing their approach. We shot with two cameras and primarily used a Sony HDR-FX1. One of the toughest challenges came because I wanted the crew to be seen in the film. So, for example, when you're seeing the shot from one camera, you can see the other camera operator in view. This became incredibly tricky at times with continuity and particularly with the fight scene between Joe and me."

With work completed on the film, the next job was getting it seen… "The most important thing for me at the time was that it actually got reviewed," reckons Mark. "I was more concerned with the film going unnoticed, but obviously once the reviews start to come in you can't help but hope there's some positive ones among them. I've always stated that I wouldn't let reviews necessarily affect what I want to do, but at the same time you have to be prepared to take comments on board, even the critical ones, which is not always easy to do.



"Regardless of budget, poor acting is unacceptable... this is often one of the things that can let down lower budget productions" - Mark Noyce



Fortunately we had some very positive reviews and comments, which was extremely encouraging. I was aware that being the writer, director and co-star, I was potentially open to receive criticism but generally they were complimentary and I was pleased with the result."

Good vibrations

The positive vibe was enough to persuade Mark to start work on his second feature, titled This is Jayde: The One Hit Wonder… "I like coming up with ideas for characters," he elaborates. "I would enjoy playing and then developing background stories and surroundings for them, so this actually started with a character I'd developed, which eventually became Jayde. He's not an unpleasant character like the role I played in On the Ropes, he's just a little bit clueless and doesn't live in the real world. He was a pop star in the 90s and has spent his whole life living like a celebrity, even though he hasn't done anything since 1995. People's fascination with celebrities and wanting to be famous is something I find interesting and also quite amusing, so when I started writing a background story for him it opened up a lot of situations I could put him in and I knew it had to be a comedy."



Mark Noyce discusses a scene



At this point it's hard not to notice that also on board for feature number two is Shaun Williamson, which most people will immediately recognise as Barry from Eastenders. However, Sean has shown he has a lot to offer the world of comedy in other roles… "I was really impressed with Shaun in Ricky Gervais' and Stephen Merchant's Extras," says Mark. "It was the first time I'd seen him do comedy and thought he had played the role brilliantly. I'd initially written a scene with him in mind for On the Ropes, but unfortunately he was unable to do it and obviously with it being my first film and with no real track record as a producer/director it was difficult to convince him it was worth doing. When it was released, I sent him a copy of the DVD. I wasn't sure whether he would even watch it, but I sent it to show that I'd managed to complete it and get it out more than anything if I'm honest. Luckily, it turned out to be a good move as he contacted me straight after watching it and said he thought it was great and wanted to meet up to hear about what I was doing next.

What also helped was the role I pitched to Shaun was very different to the type of thing he would normally play. His role as 'Barry in Eastenders' is extremely well-known, so it's very easy for him to get typecast, and although he is playing a version of himself in This is Jayde: The One Hit Wonder, it's nothing like the



version people are used to seeing. His character is extremely nasty and Shaun was very excited to get stuck into the role."

A team effort

The pair went on to collaborate with the writing of This is Jayde. When Mark first put the idea of the film to Shaun he'd already got the main characters outlined and a general plot, but when they got talking Shaun really connected with the characters and the whole idea. "I can remember going out for a meal with him and talking about the outline I had for the plot," reflects the filmmaker. "And by the time I'd got home he'd written and sent me a scene. A lot of people will know Shaun from his acting, but probably don't realise what a talented and enthusiastic writer he is."

As for which part of the process he prefers most, Mark loves his writing, but he's also more than happy to tackle any part of the filmmaking process… "For me, the enjoyment and challenge comes from writing something I can envision bringing to life, so the two feel like they compliment each other," he enthuses. "When I write, I'm constantly thinking of how it would look and who could play the characters. I've been very fortunate in that I'm in a position where I can be involved in so many aspects of the whole process, so when things can get tough and you've been working a long day I remind myself of how lucky I am."

The story itself follows Jayde, who had a number one hit in 1990 called Penetrate, as half of a duo, but he clearly wasn't the one with any talent. The problem was, he didn't seem to know that, so after his hit he left the band to go solo and never had a hit record again. Whereas his former band member is now a superstar. Fast forward to 2014 and he thinks the time is right for a comeback and subsequently auditions on a TV talent show hosted by the one and only Shaun Williamson.

"We actually still have a few parts to cast, which we're looking at doing in the next couple of months"

"Well," laughs Mark. "I've always found people's fascination with reality television and TV talent shows quite strange and, as I mentioned previously, I'd created this character called Jayde and thought this was an obvious situation to throw him into."

Second time around

Experience gained on the first film also made things easier second time around, to a certain degree… "It certainly is from an experience point of view, but the project is more ambitious," says Mark. "So I think you always want to improve on what you've done before. Most of the pressure comes from putting it on myself really, but I'm sure that can be said for most of us. Getting people involved has been easier this time round too and I think that's mostly down to the fact that On the Ropes was released and received positive reviews, so people's confidence in me has grown. The goal for me now is to ensure it continues going in that direction."

As a filmmaker, having a big budget obviously allows you to do some of the things much easier and having a large pile of money to spend would be really nice, Mark admits. "However, for many of us that simply isn't reality," he adds. "But that certainly isn't going to prevent me from trying to produce the best quality work that I can. If I write something, which I'm also producing, I will make considerations for what I feel I can realistically film and this can often directly affect the script. In an ideal world I wouldn't need to do that, but this is the position I'm at for the moment and, to progress, I need to be working and improving during the process."

Different strokes

Second time around also saw Mark and his team tackle the filmmaking rather differently to On the Ropes… "The filming style is completely different," he explains. "For On the Ropes we had the authentic documentary look, but this is shot in a more traditional film method. We are using different cameras and a



Some of the cast and crew of This is Jayde: The One Hit Wonder

lot more work is being done on storyboarding. The crew is significantly larger, mostly because it is a more ambitious project, so that is inevitable. We're at the early stages of filming at the moment, we spent a bit of time doing script readings and have also done a few test scenes. We actually still have a few parts to cast, which we're looking at doing in the next couple of months."

Mark will also be using his experiences of promoting the first film to ramp up promotional efforts of the second offering too… "The promoting and marketing of a film is such an important part of making it a success but also something that can be incredibly hard," he states. "For the big studio films, they will of course pump lots of money into the marketing campaign and we'll see constant adverts on prime time TV and huge billboards and posters everywhere, but this all costs money. Unfortunately, this is money a lot of independent filmmakers can't spare, so the promotion is often left to the distributor. The issue here is, does the distribution company want to take a gamble on spending money to promote a film, which potentially may or may not make a return on their investment, and the answer usually is no."

So which part of the business is the hardest - making the films or getting them seen? "I'd probably give you a different answer to that question depending on the stage I was at when you asked me," he laughs. "The truth is, I find both enjoyment and frustration in equal measures, but in different ways. Obviously, with the production you have the excitement of starting a new project, but there are the concerns and struggles that go with taking on so much work of that magnitude. Once the film is made then getting it released is incredibly exciting, but for reasons we've just mentioned, getting your work seen and correctly marketed can be hard."

Onwards and upwards

Nevertheless, Mark seems optimistic about his future fortunes and has plenty planned on the filmmaking front… "I've got a couple of other projects on the go," he says. "Which I can hopefully look at progressing once This is Jayde: The One Hit Wonder is completed. I've been writing a horror on and off for quite some time and have recently been working on the script for that again. Horror is one of my favourite genres to watch, but as much as I'd love to produce one, the script needs to be right, particularly as so many have already been done to such a high-quality. Inbetween producing my own films I also like to act for other directors, so hopefully I'll get an opportunity to do some more of that between productions. As far as the other cast and crew members are concerned, I'm sure I'll be working with a lot of them again. We've begun to build a very talented and supportive team and I'm confident we'll see more of them."

And is he confident about the way the business is heading? "I have mixed feelings," says Mark in closing. "The business feels like it has changed over the years and there are some really good opportunities for independent filmmakers to produce high-quality work. Collaborating is really important though and something I would like to see more of. There is room for all of us in the business, so it shouldn't always feel so competitive." ■



Joe Egan rehearses a scene with Sean Byrne and Pele Reid

PRODUCER INTERVIEW

A MINOR MIRACLE

Jon Towlson talks to producer Jen Handorf about The Borderlands, a thrilling, chilling and highly claustrophic British film with a strong hint of humour thrown in for good measure…



31-year-old producer Jennifer Handorf is riding high. Her new film, The Borderlands, the first feature film on UK distributor Metrodome's production slate, has just sold to numerous territories around the world. Readers of Digital FilmMaker in Germany, Austria, Benelux, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela and North America can look forward to catching this spine-chilling tale later this year. And Metrodome will, of course, be releasing the film here in the UK, this coming April.

Written and directed by Elliot Goldner, The Borderlands follows the investigation of paranormal events taking place at a desolate Church in sleepy Devon; long-term Ben Wheatley collaborator, Robin Hill, plays Gray, a mouthy technician recruited to accompany and film the progress of veteran priest-cum-paranormal investigator Deacon (Gordon Kennedy) as he tries to get to the bottom of an apparent miracle that occurred in the church. Humorous banter between the likeable pair soon turns to sheer terror as the viewer is led into events that prove to be inexplicable. This reviewer caught The Borderlands at Mayhem last August, and the audience jumped out of the seats - the proverbial popcorn flew. Similar responses from festival audiences worldwide indicate that The Borderlands is all set to hit big. It's quite simply the best British 'folk horror' movie in decades.

"We secured US distribution from AFM. Obviously Metrodome are distributing it in the UK. We're quite happy with it, y'know!" Jen



Shooting down in deepest Devon



reports. “It was a project that got developed at Metrodome. We had UK distribution to start but getting US distribution from our first market out is actually pretty encouraging. The previous feature I did, with Sean Hogan, called The Devil’s Business, that one took ages to get distribution on, we premiered at Frightfest, and then didn’t actually get a distributor until the following year, in the UK. And while that film has sold to some strange territories, like Japan for instance, it still doesn’t have a US distributor and it’s been out for a couple of years now. So it’s great to have something like The Borderlands get that locked in so quickly.”

Making progress

And happy she should be. Jennifer has come a long way in the last six years, since gaining her first producer credit in 2006. “Yes, it’s really gratifying to be where I am at the moment. When you get into something like filmmaking, you never really know whether you’re going to have a career or not, especially as a freelancer. Sometimes, in the middle of it, you actually wonder whether or not you have a career, but I’ve got two distributed features, I’ve got two that are currently being sold, and a couple we’re going to start later this year so - heck! Nothing to complain about, apart from maybe not getting enough sleep!”

But let’s rewind to the beginning. How did American-born Jen get her start in the film business? Did she attend film school like so many of her fellow countrymen (and women)? “I’m double-film schooled!” Jen laughs. “I went to Columbia University for undergrad, where I applied thinking I’d be a journalism major, and then I discovered that every class I wanted to take was a film class. I didn’t even think that was something you could do legitimately, go to university for filmmaking, that just sounded like too much fun, but I ended up switching. They only do film criticism for undergrad at Columbia, so I was a film criticism major, and I double majored with psychology, which has helped in the film industry quite a bit! Off the back of that I started out producing theatre as an undergrad, produced a couple of shows at Columbia, and then, just after graduation, my friend Richard ‘Moon’ Molson said ‘how would you feel about producing my thesis film?’ Sounded brilliant, but I literally had no idea how to do that! He said, ‘Don’t worry about it. I know how to do it. I’ll walk you through it.’”



Gordon Kennedy gets messy

The resulting short, Pop Foul (2006), turned out to be a steep learning curve for the fledgling producer. “It was terrifying. They say don’t work with old people, kids or dogs. We had kids and dogs! I figured two out of three ain’t bad. There were crazy things like filming on the streets of New York. The location we wanted to use suddenly became unavailable and so we ended up on All Hallows Eve filming in Brooklyn without a permit and we got stopped by the police. We were just riffing, trying not to go to jail! But we got away with it all, and at the end we were left with this really spectacular, moving film. It played at Sundance, won a student Academy Award. It got bought by HBO. It did all sorts of really fantastic things and so,





as a first film, you get kind of a bit addicted to that, to what happens when you make a quality film."

A rising talent

After that, Jen became a producer-for-hire for grad students. "It's the metaphor of comparing a producer to a wedding planner. It's not your special day but you damn better be sure that everything's there and in place. They would bring me on. I decided at that stage, on short films, that I couldn't be the person who raises the budget, because it takes a long time, and you find that when you're asking for that kind of money for that kind of project - something that you're not going to see a return on - you can't really ask investors, you end up asking friends and family, and that's a source you get to tap a precious few times. So the directors would bring their budgets and I would help them with everything else, and they would always contribute as well. There were directors who knew exactly what cast they wanted, what DOP they wanted, where they wanted to shoot, or had secured a grant. I certainly was not a one-woman show, but it was real education because I was benefitting from their knowledge as well, because I hadn't really trained to do it at that stage."

After Columbia, Jen moved to the UK to be with her now-husband, the special effects artist, Dan Martin. She was getting ready to forge on with producing over here when Hollywood called. "About three months after I arrived in the UK, I got a phone call from Los Angeles saying I'd been accepted onto the producing programme at USC." This being a highly sought after Master's degree programme at the prestigious University of Southern California (whose alumni include John Carpenter and George Lucas, no less), taking 25 students each year from a thousand applicants, left Jen with a difficult choice. "I'd just got engaged, I'd just completely moved myself to a different country; I was starting a life here and then this opportunity came up. Dan gave me his blessing; said he didn't ever want to be the reason I regretted something, and that I needed to go. So I went to LA for two years and worked out there. I worked for Fox International while I went to class in the evenings."

As well as producing a number of student shorts whilst at USC, while hanging out at Fox, Jen also worked in the equipment centre at the weekends, which turned out to be a very good experience for an independent producer to have. "I made a real effort to assist in every department, camera, lighting, sound, post, make up, costume, everything." Having this hand-on experience enabled Jen to take firmer control of her own productions later on. "It makes it second nature that you anticipate what questions or problems the different departments are going to have, so that when you get to the shoot, you don't have your make-up artist coming in and saying 'actually, can we have a shower



because there's this scene where the actor's completely covered in blood and they're going to be freezing for the rest of the day if we don't get them showered off.' So it's that kind of thing that makes you see things from all angles with a production."

Making movies

Although her experience at USC and Fox taught her about the business of movies, her priorities have always remained in making movies, not making deals. "It was really useful for me to be entrenched in the creative before the commercial became a





concern - to have done so many short films before I got into the commercial side of it. I think a lot of producers see the money as the goal, where I definitely see it as a tool. I was told the other day about a line producer who, once they've finished their film, split whatever overages there are fifty-fifty between themselves and the production company. That seems counterproductive. You've got this money to make the movie. If you've saved all this money, surely it means splash out on that big scene or get longer in post. You shouldn't have money left over at the end!"

After Jen graduated from USC she had the option of staying in LA to continue working at Fox, but chose, instead, to return to Blighty. "I really love the British film community, the British film industry, and I love the focus on story and the focus on character and not just commercial return. I was at a meeting the other day at one of the major UK film production companies, and an executive told me: 'Yes, we get criticised for not thinking enough about commercial return but we just want to make good movies!' If someone in LA said that, they might spontaneously combust! Not to put a downer on LA, but the economics are so front and centre out there that it makes it difficult, sometimes, as an independent to do something creative."



"To those people who would put sixty grand into a short film, I would tell them go and make a feature instead" - Jen Handorf

Southern comfort

"I grew up in Memphis, Tennessee, and there are independent filmmakers there: Jim Jarmusch and Craig Brewer, those guys. I love their films, and Jarmusch, especially, I think is an incredible filmmaker; but there's just not a lot of room for it. I looked at doing some films in Memphis, and I'd love to go back and film there one day because I think it's a really rich locale, but you have to drive all your film crew in from Nashville, and they're all union, or it's some student whose just picked up a camera and doesn't really know how it works. It's that kind of polarity between being able to make a film and having it cost a load of money in order to be able to get the talent that you need, and being able to do something that you can control and is creatively driven rather than financially driven. It's very polarised. Whereas here there is a nice middle ground, where you can get incredible crew, paying everybody, but you can work on a budget still, and you can work on a budget level that means you don't have to answer to a studio or an exec or a higher power that is just focused on the commercial."

To her delight, when Jen returned to England from LA, she found the independent scene vibrant here. "Since Dan has been working for several years he was able to introduce me to a lot of people. I work predominantly in genre film, but it's more because of the filmmakers I come across and the relationships I form because of that, rather than because that's the only kind of film I want to make. I love it. I think horror makes for a brilliant canvass that any genre can concur with and can be painted on. From the Frightfest guys, to the Neil Marshalls to the Jake Wests, everybody sees each other all the time and we all bounce ideas off each other and it's a lot more supportive. There's room for everybody.

There's certainly not as much

money here as for people in the States, but it's also more accessible for people who make a space for themselves.

I did two more shorts before my very first feature, Isle of Dogs (2011). That had an American director (Tammi Sutton) who brought the money in from a friend of hers, a single equity financier. I got onto it because Sean Hogan who wrote it recommended me, and it was a great job to break me in. The production itself went incredibly smoothly but the personality management was an intense experience! I learned how to produce a feature. That was terrifying. You've got half-a-million pounds that you're in charge of, it's all got to be spent properly and accounted to the government properly. That's a lot of pressure for a 24-year-old. It was great for forming relationships with crew and for giving me a coming out into the British independent film scene because, despite that the film wasn't a real success, having made feature put me in a different realm.

To those people who would put sixty grand into a short film, I would tell them go and make a feature instead. Obviously if it's a brilliant short film and it's beautiful and everybody loves it, and it's critically and commercially successful, that's the goal. But actually just having the credit (on a feature) makes the difference, just having made the thing makes a real difference."

Rough and smooth

After Isle of Dogs, Sean Hogan and Jen decided they'd like to work together again. "We didn't have much money, but Sean had this script idea that was pretty straightforward. He went off and polished it up, and I said 'one location, couple of guys, not two heavy on the physical effects, let's go do this.'

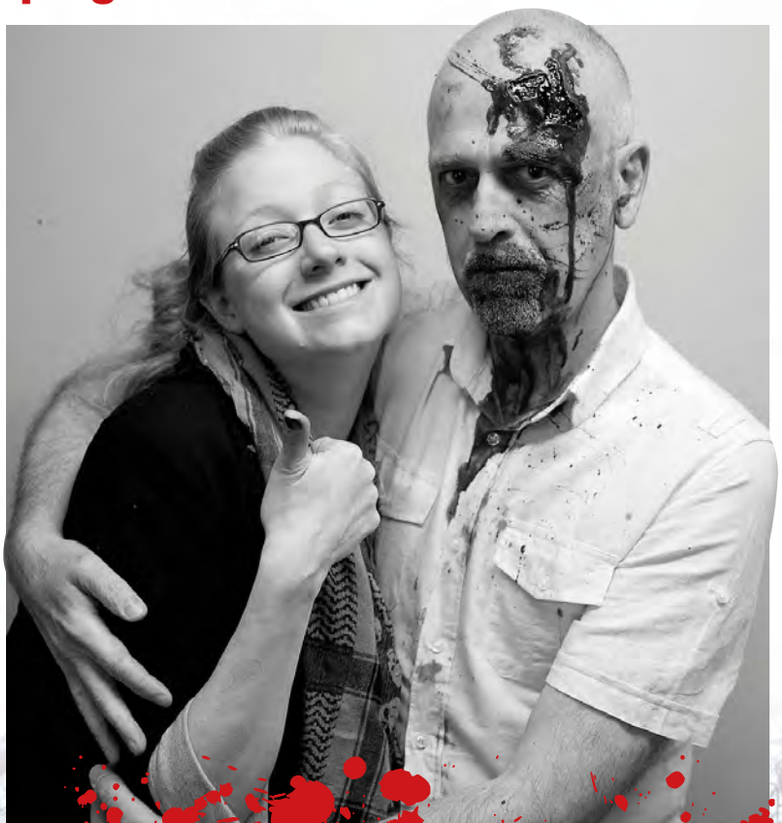
The result was Devil's Business: an altogether happier experience, but not without its own unique challenges. "We shot it in nine days. The entire budget was seven thousand pounds. It actually came out pretty cool! Not to say we didn't have trials and tribulations on that. We lost our main location two days before the shoot. We had this location in south Wales. The DOP and I drove out there and they wouldn't let us in! We said, this is crazy, we're supposed to be filming here in two days. They said 'we don't want you to film here anymore unless we can sit in the room with you the entire time.' 'And why's that?' 'Well, you're pornographers and devil worshippers, and we want to know the truth about what you're filming.'

We had had a promotional photo taken in Fangoria magazine, Sean, Me, Dan and (executive producer) Jay Slater, all knelt around this dead baby in a pentagram. So the location owner had Googled that, and one of my TV credits is on a show called PG Porn, a comedy series done for Spike (the American version of Dave). It's all trashy comedy, good fun, but the location owner chucked us out and kept our deposit!"

Luckily, despite this rather-more-than-minor setback, everyone on the film mucked in and the production eventually found another location, this time in Winchester. "It was a really small crew, about fifteen people. Our actors were incredible. We were a long time in post, as you tend to be with budgets of that size. In the end, the film sold to Metrodome, and a couple of other places - it was very well received. It served exactly the purpose that Sean and I wanted it to, which was to renew our faith in filmmaking!"

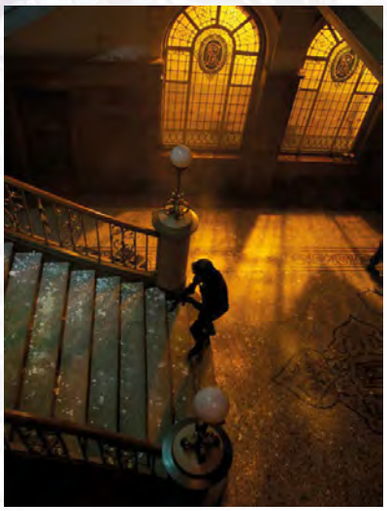


"Three months after I arrived in the UK, I got a call from LA saying I'd been accepted onto the producing programme at USC" - Jen Handorf



The Borderlands

Filmmaking faith thus renewed, after working with leading UK distributor Metrodome on The Devil's Business (and producing The Forgotten, directed by Oliver Frampton, in the interim), Jen found herself in the enviable position of being approached by Metrodome to produce their first feature. "The project developed within Metrodome," Jen reveals. "The Managing Director, Jezz Vernon, had brought the company into production last year, the idea is that, a lot of the films that they want, they'd be better off owning them worldwide, developing them and helping them stay commercial for the market, than getting to them at a film festival where they have no creative input and are only





able to control the UK territory. Makes good sense. They had looked at a couple of things and decided that they wanted to do this found footage film, in a church, something to do with the Vatican. They brought on the writer/director Elliot Goldner, and he worked with them on a couple of treatments. By this stage they had already purchased The Devil's Business, and I'd had a couple of meetings with them over that.

They called me in one day, and I had no idea where the conversation was going. It was one of those conversations like where you're on a date and you think you're about to be broken up with, when actually it's a proposal. I thought they were going to tell us that they had to drop The Devil's Business for some reason, and in fact what they were saying was 'would you like to come on and produce this film for us?'"

Decisions, decisions

"I'd had the experience for producing horror before. The script wasn't so developed that I wouldn't get to have any say in it. There was no cast attached, so I could have a great deal of input there. Elliot and I got on really well and saw the film going in the same direction, and so I came on board. There wasn't a huge amount of money." She laughs. "They've told me since that none of them was actually convinced that the film was going to happen until we started filming on the first day, and I've realised that if you're not used to production it does always feel like that. We filmed in August 2012. Robin Hill was first of the cast to come on board. I knew him from Ben Wheatley's films. We met at South by SouthWest in Austin, TX when Kill List premiered. We hit it off. He did a short film for Frightfest with me, and my husband, Dan, started working with him. I really loved the idea of him as Gray, as this techie, geeky, funny cheeky-chappie, but really super witty as well. I think it was after the



Filming in the great outdoors







Sightseers wrap party that I asked him if he wanted to be in The Borderlands, and I took extreme advantage because he'd had a couple of celebratory pints! He said, 'yeah, sounds great. I love to do a bit of pretending.' So we had Rob on board, but we were casting down to the wire for the other characters."

With Rob Hill now cast, Jen and her team set out to find the right actor to play Deacon, the dour down-to-earth priest-cum-paranormal investigator, who together with Gray, tries to get to the bottom of the strange events taking place at the remote church.

"Gordon Kennedy just blew us away," Jen remembers. "We saw about half a dozen Deacons that day, and we had some extremely good choices. Our casting director, Briony Barnett did an excellent job. When Gordon came in he had cycled to the audition and was a sweaty, red-faced mess. He came bursting through the door with his bike and his helmet, threw it on the ground and said 'right, where are words?' He sat down, did the scene and immediately was Deacon: somebody who comes into a room, immediately owns it but is your best friend."

Floods, reshoots and re-edits

"The shoot was relatively smooth, really. We got flooded in one day, which was a bit terrifying, and I wasn't sure how the crew was going to feel about having to stay on set if that was the case. I'm not if they'd have been best pleased by that, but the floods receded. We filmed down in Devon, around Newton Abbot. The church is actually West Ogwell Church. It's an absolutely stunning building built around AD1100. The cottage is north of Newton Abbot, and the caves are actually the Chislehurst caves in Kent. We discovered that they were built around the same time as the church. They're man-made, chalk caves.

We all stayed in a B&B in Torquay because it was the cheapest closest place I could find that would give us a rate and serve us breakfast at 6am every morning. It was great because there was a bar in the B&B as well, and the landlord would keep the bar open late for us! So we'd wrap at 8pm, get back to the B&B by 9pm, have dinner and then a couple of drinks to unwind."

One of the most appealing aspects of The Borderlands is its focus on the developing









relationship between Deacon and Gray, as they get to grips with the increasingly paranormal events. The humour between grows naturally from characters who try to make the most of a strange, frightening situation. It feels unforced and natural: how much of that was based on improvisation?

"The Borderlands was predominantly scripted." Jen reveals. "There was a complete script for the film, but then there were a lot of scenes where the guys would just have an idea and do a bit of talking, spin some things and come up with their own. There were some places in the script where it said something like 'Deacon and Gray fill the time while waiting for Mark to show up'. So that's where we get things like them playing puzzles and them looking at the map. But I'd say it was 90% scripted with 10% of improv.

There were a lot of changes, of course. We were a long time in the edit with this film. I think part of it was, it had slightly become something different on set to what it was on the page, and initially it hadn't been a comedy script, there was hardly any comedy in it. It was quite serious. And on set in these improv moments, Gordon and Rob developed this real comedy rhythm together. So suddenly scenes that weren't meant to be funny were funny and in an edit it was really hard to see how to move from that comedy into the quite darker moments towards the end of the film.

After a couple of months we just went back to the assembly and tried again, and just started from scratch with it, and found the same film, but from a very different perspective. There were some very talented actors who got cut out entirely; there was a thread with the baby at the christening where they think that there is a much more Wicker Man kind of thing going on with the baby. All of that got cut out. There were just a couple of more things in the church, but other than that no storylines got removed. The real thing was that we then had some reshoots about ten months later. So we'd done this new edit. Everyone was really happy with it, but it had some holes, some logic inconsistencies and some places where we needed to smooth over the tone, so it was transitioning from comedy to horror but we needed something to fill in the gap a bit. So we went back to Devon and filmed two more days with the same crew and the guys. It fit right in."







Jen has worked on a variety of projects

Frightfest and beyond

"We sent it off to sound design genius Martin Pavey who mixed it in six weeks, which is insane, and then we premiered it at Frightfest. A lot of people hadn't seen it all, I think there were only about four of us who had seen it from start to finish. So there were a lot of nervous people in the audience, including myself, to be fair, because you never know how a film is going to play for people who weren't involved in it, and haven't been close to it. But it played well. They laughed in the right spots, and the only person who left the theatre the entire time was Rob because he'd had too many pints and he had to go to the loo. So it all worked out okay!"

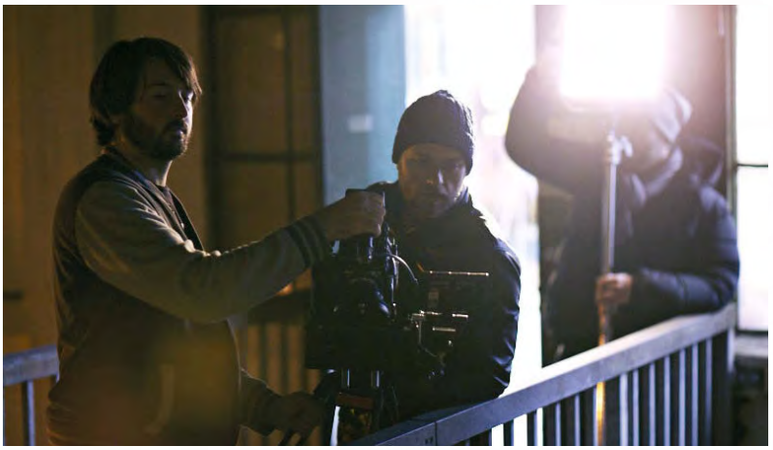
More than okay, I reckon: I tell Jen how the audience literally jumped out of their seats at the Mayhem screening, and she laughs. "I think tension, real tension, is best shared," she reflects. "You being tense in a room on your own, and the cat jumps out - you'll do a little jump, and then it's over. But if you're in a room full of people and you're

all holding your breath, and one of you screams, everybody laughs, or if one of you laughs, all of you laugh. It magnifies the experience."

Jen's credo is hard work, so it's no surprise that her diary for the next year or so is pretty damned full. "This year's looking exciting. There are two projects on the horizon. One of them is quite a small film, with a first time director, set in a submarine. We're filming that in south Wales. It's not horror, really, more of a thriller, and it's got a ticking time clock: will these people complete their mission or will the world get destroyed?"

Even more exciting is No Man's Land, with Sean Hogan. "It's a monster movie," reveals Jen. "With ghouls, undead grave robbers who live in the underworld and devour corpses. It's set in an alternate World War I, but it's effectively Heart of Darkness meets The Descent. There's a battle of wills between this evil sergeant and a grunt. You've got a hero who desperately wants to leave the war and get home to his sweetheart, but is willing to die fighting for what he believes in.





Then you've got the wicked officer who uses men as cannon fodder and only wants to follow orders, but is quite cowardly at the heart. Amidst all of this, is this unseen evil out there in the trenches; these creatures who are doing their worst. The tagline is 'War makes monsters of us all'. We have both Rob Hill and Gordon Kennedy in No Man's Land in supporting roles. We're being presold by AV Pictures and they premiered the project at AFM back in October. It was fantastically received, which is really thrilling for a relatively small genre film to get as many presale offers as we did. I seem to be spending a lot of my time in caves lately!"

Just do it

What advice does this intrepid producer have for those wanting to follow in her footsteps? "I didn't do the assistant producer, co-ordinator ladder up. I think the advice I would give therefore is: do it, just do it. Start on smaller things. There's not a huge amount of magic to producing; there's a lot of books that tell you how to do it. You don't have to go to film school to learn how to do it - you can read a book to learn how to do a budget and a schedule. Start out small, get bigger and always stretch yourself. I have never felt safe on any film. I was always a little bit worried about how far I was pushing myself and if I could do it. Was I going too far too fast? But that's how you grow. Stretching yourself that way is how you get to the next step. Pretty soon you'll find you've done four features and have studios asking about your next film. Anyone can do it if they work hard enough." ■





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THE RAIN MAN



Q&A

Tom Paton takes time out from his own filmmaking schedule to fire some questions at Elliot Grove, founder of Raindance Film Festival

Interview photography by Ashley Paton



Tom Paton and Elliot Grove chat in London

Elliot Grove has created a powerful brand in the form of Raindance and strives harder than most to empower people to pick up a camera and go make something. With a wealth of connections in the industry and years of experience in what it takes to reach the top of your game, I found Elliot to be both charming and extremely knowledgeable on all matters film related. We caught up the Raindance HQ in London on a cold February morning and, after a bit of idle chitchat, the interview went down a little something like this...

Every good feature needs an origin story, so what's yours?

"Mine is probably the least filmic you could imagine. My parents were Amish and I grew up outside of Toronto on a farm. My parents always told me 'never go to the movie theatre because the devil lives there.' I got sent into town when I was 16-years-old on a hot summers day and I had three hours to kill waiting for a part from the blacksmiths. Low and behold, there was the house of the devil just down the road. I saw Lassie Come Home and I cried like a baby, so from that moment on I was totally hooked. I spent my last year in high school in Toronto and then I ended up in art school. In the mid 70's I came over to the UK and got a job as a runner at the BBC, where I worked on the last year of Monty Python. Those guys were the same off screen as they were on screen. I'd arrive at work and John Cleese would be doing his silly walk, not because he was practicing but because that's how he really walks. They were a big inspiration on me, because they took what was between their heads and they created this huge brand out of it and that's basically what I tried to do with Raindance later on."

When did you first consider Raindance?

"I went back to Canada for what I thought would be three weeks, but ended up staying for nine years. Toronto has a very active service industry and I ended up painting sets for some really shitty films that I'd hate you see, but they usually featured a lot of gore, slime, naked women and often a spaceship. I did get to work on Close Encounters of the Third Kind and also a film called Equus, starring Richard Burton, who I was lucky enough to meet when he wasn't off his face."

What were the early days of the festival like for you, did it take a lot of nurturing or was it an instant success?

"I had a spare £150 and started Raindance doing training courses, which we still do. We have the most comprehensive film training programme of any organisation in Europe, if not the world. When I started the festival everyone thought I was nuts, because I had next to no budget and all I did was fax one sheet about the event to every production company I could think of. But it paid off because they came. We had the premiere of What's Eating Gilbert Grape, which was the first ever public appearance of a film starring Leonardo DiCaprio."

Did you have some strong guidelines for the types of films you wanted to see in the festival or is that something that evolved over time?

"The films I always loved were films like the French movie Diva and stuff by the Coen brothers like Blood Simple. These were the sorts of films we looked for, but the problem was back then that hardly anyone was making those kinds of movies in the UK, because





everyone thought you needed a million pounds to pull it off. But then people like Edgar Wright, who was my first intern, showed up and started making films like A Fist Full of Fingers, which is completely nuts. Chris Nolan made the following for £6,000 and we let him store his equipment in our office whilst he did it. Movies like that kind of began a competition to see who could make their films for the cheapest. When the advent of digital cameras came in though the whole thing really exploded and films like 28 Days Later really opened the whole industry up to a wealth of new talent."

Were there any films that really stuck out for you in those early years?

"The Blair Witch Project really sticks in my mind, not really because of the film, but because of the marketing campaign. What those guys did with the social networking aspect was unheard of at that point, and when it played at Raindance there was a lot of buzz about it for a long time because of how they'd marketed it. I thought I'd never see that kind of ingenuity again but, sure enough, a few years ago we got Paranormal Activity. The director/writer of that film, Oren Pell, told me he'd made that film using my book Lo-to-no budget filmmaking so that was really flattering."

Both you and the festival are known for championing low-budget films. What is it about that end of the market that attracts you so much?

"Well, I think there are two ways to make a film. You can either line up in front of Hollywood's ivory towers with thousands of others and hope they pick you, which they probably won't. Or, there is the indie route, which says get your mates, get a camera and just go make whatever feels right to you. That's really what Raindance is all about at our core, and the other thing is that those movies are made with real passion and nearly always have a statement to make. They are nothing like what Hollywood is doing, but when they hit, Hollywood remakes them or just nicks the idea. It always amuses me when Hollywood says they love independent film, because really they hate independent film. We can make films so much cheaper than they can and that puts at risk their cushy jobs. Hollywood is bankrupt of original ideas and all of their fresh material comes from the independent grass routes level. Raindance believes it's important to give these indie filmmakers the platform they deserve. Occasionally, indie filmmakers like Chris Nolan and Edgar Wright manage to dodge their way up the ladder to the Hollywood leagues, but most are totally crushed by the machine and I find that tragic."





We mentioned earlier your book Lo-to-no budget filmmaking. You've written a fair amount on giving away tips and tricks to the industry. Why is it important for you to share that knowledge with people and help them kickstart their careers?

"I've never really thought about why I want to share this stuff with people. I think it is important as an artist to share what you know. My dad was a preacher back home and he spent a lot of time spreading 'the good word'. When I was younger my dad took us to Somalia of all places, but not to preach. He went there to teach people how to turn their weapons into farming tools and how to build wells. It was that whole 'give someone a fish and you'll feed them for a day, teach them to fish and you'll feed them for a lifetime' approach, and that's how I was bought up. I guess it became really important to me. Also, I think the whole way the Hollywood industry works is wrong, because if you want to celebrate your art, be that music or dance or film, then you should be allowed to do that."



Do you see yourself and Raindance as part of the movement to democratise the film industry?

"Well, helping to shift the focus of the industry away from the Hollywood system is only part of what you need to do to enable people to make movies. The real problem is helping these independent films get seen and make money. Hollywood spends so much on advertising and making even terrible films get an audience that people are getting ever and ever dumbed down by what's put in front of them. Occasionally a great film like Dallas Buyers Club will come along and break the mould, but how do we take your film shot on your DSLR and get people to see it without the kind of advertising budgets Hollywood is playing with? I've just got back from Berlin where we took the film we just made called Deadly Virtues: Love.Honour.Obey and although we were lucky enough to get picked up for distribution, I can tell you for a fact that it is really hard."

Do you think the modern filmmaker should still be aiming to crack the Hollywood dream or are there other areas they should focus on? If we change up-and-coming filmmakers perception of where they should go with their talents, will that help reshape the industry?

"I grew up on a farm; so let me ask you this… If you were a potato farmer, do you think you should sell all of your potatoes to a supermarket at cost price, or do you think you should also try to sell them locally at a profit for yourself? I think self-distribution is where we should be heading, cutting out the middleman and learning to use social networking to become a master of marketing your own product. A filmmaking team has changed from the good old days when I started Raindance, because now you need to make sure your crew has someone who is skilled in social media. This is a really big job that filmmakers often overlook. There are many great indie movies that will never get seen because the team behind them are hopeless at social media."

My personal belief is that as a filmmaker, you should also position yourself as a strong businessperson. It's a fine line between art and business though. So, where do you think the modern filmmaker needs to sit on that line so that they can make a financially profitable career while still making a product that they can be artistically proud of?

"Well to be honest, we probably think the same. It's the film business, it's not the film art and filmmakers need to understand both sides of it, which is what attracts to me the industry. Like I said, I grew up on a farm and my dad would have to figure out what the summer was going to be like. If it was a wet summer then he'd plant oats and if it was a dry one he'd plant barley. But, if he screwed up then we'd go hungry. I think filmmakers need to understand where the public



Elliot doing a little bit of PR

is going, decide what kind of message they want to put out and then figure out who their audience is, because without an audience there is no hope of monetisation. That is really my qualm with the film industry, not just here in Europe but also in America, because rather than cater the film for an audience before they even start filming, they will just throw more money at extra billboard adverts without considering whether what they have created is worthy or entertaining enough for the general public to spend their hard earned money on."

As a producer, are you charmed more by a director who comes across like a Wolf of Wall Street-style businessperson or by one with a strong showreel?

"Neither really. I look for people with





"If you can get by without using the word 'Can't' or the word 'No' then you have a chance" - Elliot Grove

passion. I know many filmmakers who have terrible personalities and are either introverted or extraverted to the extreme, but they have such passion for their projects that they are perfect to work with. Without passion the film is never going to work."

You've recently produced the film called Deadly Virtues: Love.Honour.Obey under your Raindance Raw production banner.

Can you tell us a little about the project, what attracted you to it?

"I got an email this time last year from someone saying that they had been kicked out of film school because they suffered from cerebral palsy, bi-polar disorder, had Asperger's and the right side of their body regularly collapsed. He is diabetic, up for a kidney transplant and generally massively depressed. Did I think he had a future as a screenwriter with all of these afflictions? Absolutely. In my mind these were the perfect personality traits for a conflict heavy screenplay. Before long I was meeting with Ate de Jong, the director of Drop Dead Fred and many other films, and together we raised a little bit of money through Kickstarter and some members of Raindance to get the film made very quickly. We've just got back from Berlin where we displayed the movie to distributors."



When do you expect that we'll be able to see it?

"We haven't sold the UK distribution yet, but we're hoping to get news of that very soon. One always hopes for a cinema release, but that's practically unlikely these days. We view the festival circuit as the cinema release and then it'll probably be available via VOD services."

Let's talk a little about this year's festival. What's in store for those people that are attending?

"We don't have any breaking news yet, because it's just to soon. But, if the last one is anything to go by it's going to be an incredible year. Nearly half of the films that screened at Raindance last year have picked up distribution, which I'm very proud of. We are also Oscar qualified for short films and last year three of the five shorts that were up for the award were screened at Raindance."

Raindance has become a global brand, so what are your future plans for continued expansion?

"We're in talks to open up in Moscow and next month we're opening in Los Angeles. I don't look for cities though, I look for people. We meet so many fantastic people that come through our doors and if someone impresses us with their energy, ambition and willingness to work for nothing then they are hired!"

You run a series of great courses here at Raindance as well as post-graduate degrees. Why should an aspiring filmmaker consider



joining one these courses if they're looking to further their film career?
"That's an easy one to answer. We don't teach filmmaking, we make filmmakers. It's a different way of looking at the whole learning process. All of our tutors and mentors are working professionals who love teaching and they actually show you how to get things made. I think the industry has made a big mistake because they have tried to mystify film and make it seem like it's really complicated, when in fact it is really simple. What we do on our courses is demystify it for people and get them out and about making films."

How do you see the next five years of the film industry unfolding? Are there certain patterns emerging or is technology just moving to fast for us to be able to predict?
"The big thing in the next few years I think will be trans-media. It's not a new concept, but perhaps within the next five years we will borrow from gaming technology and give home viewers the option of multiple story directions. Also, I think story telling is always going to stay the same, but the delivery mechanism will change and I think the integration of second screen technology will start to increase over the next few years. The film industry is becoming a cottage industry though and what the next five years will really boil down to for new filmmakers is how good are you? How good is your story?"

What is the future for Raindance, where would you like to see the festival heading in the next five years?
"We've never thought of ourselves as being a big festival, but my goal has always been to make sure that our product is the coolest, hippest and most entertaining festival that you'll find anywhere in the world."

Can you give us one sentence that our readers can hold on to as they strive for a career in film?
"If you can get by without using the word 'Can't' or the word 'No' then you have a chance." ■

For more information on Elliot Grove and Raindance visit: www.raindance.org
For more information on Tom Paton visit his site over at www.tpakproductions.com
Or, follow him on Twitter @TPAKproductions





SHOW AND TELL

BVE bills itself as the essential broadcast and production technology event. So, Digital FilmMaker went along to see what all the fuss was about and found professionals waiting in the wings ready to deliver some awesome seminars...

London's ExCel Centre is a bit of a drag to get to, but it's got a never ending conveyor belt of trade shows going on, not least of which was the recent Broadcast Video Expo, or BVE for short. With 'over 300 exhibitors, 200 speakers and 120 free seminars, demo stations and workshops' the show preview was certainly tempting. So, did it live up to expectations? Well, it was definitely a pleasant surprise. BVE said it was expecting around 15,000 visitors over the three days from the 25th to the 27th of February and even by lunchtime on the first day it was buzzing,

despite the fact that it's regrettably not open to the general public. That said, students on relevant courses are graciously allowed in for a peek on the Thursday afternoon...

The good thing with this event is that it's relatively easy to get around. Sure, you'll get through some shoe leather, but it's nothing like the forthcoming NAB event in Las Vegas or CES at the same location, for example. So, by comparison, it's small but perfectly formed with an inviting sprawl of trade stands, exhibitor booths, theatre areas and, naturally, numerous places to guzzle overpriced coffee. If you had the time, then there was plenty to keep you occupied aside from browsing the exhibitor areas, which had some really cool kit on show, ranging from hardware and software through to the likes of insurance providers for the industry.

Hands on

Perhaps the biggest thrill for anyone who has never had the chance was being able to get your grubby mits all over some of the latest cameras along with seeing some great examples of old kit from over the years into the bargain. The central section where an artist was spending the day making lots of mess with paint. Meanwhile, around the perimeter of his workspace was a collection of cameras including the likes of the Canon C300 and a couple of Blackmagic offerings. You could simply walk on up, take the controls and view your shooting technique on the monitors above. Granted, you weren't able to walk away with them and have a play farther afield, but full marks to CVP for letting anyone have a go.

It was also possible to strap on a Steadicam and wander around, marvelling at how steady it kept things, or get behind the controls of any number of cranes that would send cameras soaring above the heads of the crowd. While it was clear to see that many of the trade and industry people present were keen to catch up with old friends and colleagues, it was also great to see the wide variety of filmmakers at BVE, both young and, erm, not quite so young.



Hands off! The very desirable new ARRI Amira



There was awesome kit around every corner

Supporting cast

It was also great to see some of our own supporters at the event, not least of which was the BeyondHD booth, fronted by a very animated MD Keith Harding who had a chunky pile of issue 12 on show complete with his amazing drone on the cover. Drones were out in force actually and Keith was having to work double-time in order to keep up with the interest in what he and his innovative company does. The kit-fest continued with a dazzling array of sliders, cages, monitors and lights, being supplemented by every imaginable kind of software suite, although the impressive Adobe stand looked a little unloved by visitors. However, they were probably over at the theatre opposite where the software giant had bumper line-up of industry professionals ready to deliver handy insights into handling their programs more productively.

The Blackmagic Design exhibit was notably busy, with loads of interest being shown in both the camera range and also its other wide spread of technology products. ARRI had an impressive presence too and were showing off their new Amira documentary-style camera, which offers single-user ergonomics, cost-efficient in-camera grading and Alexa image quality up to 200 fps. It's a very nicely put together piece of kit, although there was plenty of other stuff vying for attention. Sony had its camera range on show, as did Fujifilm and Panasonic, but it was also cool to see how much of a cottage industry the filmmaking arena is. There were plenty of small companies with some very big ideas on show. What's more, while there was a global presence in terms of where business was coming from, a good proportion of the exhibitors appeared to be homegrown. Elsewhere, Avid looked to be doing good business with its newish Avid Everywhere system and was busy showcasing the European debut of Avid S6.



Nikon and its funky robot cam

Networking opportunity

Of course, aside from all the snazzy kit on show, there were also the



A painted lady on the Atomos stand

seminars, which came thick and fast over the course of the three days, covering every topic under the sun. There was broadcast IT, cinematography and lighting, production, post-production, 4K and, naturally, talks on how to connect all of this filmmaking malarkey together. Sure, if you wanted to talk there were plenty of people who'd happily listen, but some of the best moments were when you got to listen to the professionals who, of course, make it all sound so annoyingly easy. The Soho Editors theatre also featured a non-stop showcase of all of your favourite software applications, with incredibly valuable insights being offered by people who use the likes of Final Cut Pro and DaVinci Resolve every day of their working lives.

Another innovative concept was the Skills Zone, which was an idea first seen at the last BVE and improved upon this year. It effectively gave anyone who was visiting the chance to seek advice and guidance from professionals on a whole variety of topics. Over the course of the three days you could get to grips with common quandaries, such as how to survive as a freelancer or writing for low-budget films through to honing your skills as a director or making sure you're covered by insurance. What's more, the advice being dished out was coming from true professionals, including staff from the BBC, independent production companies and the featured-this-issue Elliot Grove, founder of the Raindance Film festival.

Considering all of these seminars were free to attend you'd be hard pressed to find this kind of gratis tutoring anywhere else. Getting practical advice from industry professionals at the top of their game is worth its weight in gold. Roll on next year we say. ■



DEVIL IN THE DETAIL

Wandering Rose is a film made by Corrie Greenop in the highlands of Scotland using plenty of initiative, a mortgage deposit and a little bit of bad luck…

One of the first things that makes our job easier here at Digital FilmMaker is when we get approached by someone who has something we can work with. Filmmaker Corrie Greenop definitely has the right idea when it comes to creating the perfect promotional package. In particular, he sent us plenty of great location images, some of which you'll see across the next few pages. Meanwhile, the project in question is Wandering Rose, a 'psychological thriller with horror moments' according to Corrie and that too makes an intriguing proposition…

"I have always been a huge fan of films and filmmaking ever since I was at school," says Corrie, revealing the origins of where he got his eye for detail. "Most Fridays, at the end of the school day, my friends and I would go along to the drama studio and beg the drama teacher to lend us the Sony Hi8 camcorder they had to film drama exams, and let us shoot our own short films over the weekend.

I made all kinds of films. Films with remote-controlled cars, James Bond spoofs where we usually ended up with spectacular fight scenes in scrapyards, or other venues that I thought added production value. I was hooked from then on and had decided that I wanted to become a filmmaker. Whilst studying A-level media at college, I continued making short films. Rather than get a job at the local bar or supermarket, I wanted to try and make money from doing what I loved. I had decided that my best and easiest route was to make wedding videos. I could borrow the college camera over the weekend and then edit the videos on the college computer library from 3pm till 6pm using their free Windows Movie Maker software."

Living in a small village in the Yorkshire Dales for the majority of his childhood meant Corrie had built up quite a reputation around the village, from being in local school plays to playing for the football team. Because of this, he had met the local church reverend on several occasions. So, the entrepreneurial Corrie put together a ten page word document with a sales pitch including what video services he could provide and the cost of all the different packages he could offer. The filmmaker also included his uncle's wedding video that he'd shot and edited as a sample of his work. Corrie basically asked the vicar if he could give the package to couples who were planning on getting married at the church, then sweetened the deal saying he would give the church 50 per cent of the money made. After shooting his first half-dozen weddings, he had saved up enough to buy a new Apple PowerBook G4. And, the great thing about that was that it came with iMovie. Corrie now had an edit suite all to himself.





Production suite

"After the two years at college I had shot well over 50 short films using my mates as cast and crew," he goes on. "I tried everything. Horror films, documentaries, little narratives, comedies, even adventure films of rock-climbing and skiing. With all these under my belt I managed to get a place at the Northern Film School in Leeds to do a degree in Film and Moving Image. Whilst the academic part of the degree didn't really enthuse or excite me about the film industry, the best part of being at university was all the amazing free equipment I could use whenever I wanted. At university, I tried to get as much real work experience as possible, working for free on my days off and at weekends at three local production companies in the area. I think it's fair to say that I now make the best cups of tea in Yorkshire, but it got me on sets and people got to know me. Throughout the three years at film school I had worked my way up from runner to camera assistant at three companies. Impressed with my enthusiasm and editing skills, after university I was given a job at one of the production houses and have been there ever since, while also continuing with my freelance career."

Prior to this project, Corrie had been working as a freelance camera operator and editor in the four years since leaving The Northern Film School, as well as working on a variety of projects that have taken him around the globe. From shooting documentaries in Nairobi, Kenya and Jordan to making music videos in Marbella and filming boat parties in Ibiza. His main line of work before shooting the feature was mainly in the corporate sector - everything from health and safety films, conferences, even films about the Red Arrows he says. He's also made several music films for different genres from country to house music. All of which must have set him up nicely for the Wandering Rose project…

"The one thing that has really helped me over the past few years as a freelancer is being prepared for anything," he considers. "As a freelancer, you work with different crews, different environments, different equipment on nearly every single job. You are constantly out of your comfort zone. You never shoot



"One of the major disadvantages of shooting in the Scottish Highlands is the midges... They're visible in so many scenes" - Corrie Greenop



the same thing twice (hopefully). You must be able to adapt to new and different challenges constantly. These types of jobs also allow you to be as creative as possible. When shooting documentaries and live events, there's a massive pressure to get required footage as the event unfolds - there's no second chance to capture the moment - if you miss it, it's game over and you don't get employed again. Even in corporate jobs, you still have to use your creative imagination because so much of the time the subject you're shooting is pretty dull, so it's up to you to tell the story in the most creative way possible that will suit the different tastes of your viewers. What I've learned is, even corporate audiences appreciate inventive and clever filmmaking with good production values. All these skills were key to helping me on the feature shoot. Always be clear about maximising every situation you find yourself filming - look and look again - and ask yourself, what's the best way of shooting something."

Accidental encounter

Wandering Rose came about accidentally, however, and quite literally! "I was in quite a serious rock climbing accident about four years ago and had to have reconstructive knee surgery," explains the filmmaker. "After the surgery, I became bed-ridden for three months. After exhausting my collection of Japanese and Korean horror films, my family thought it would be a good idea if I came away with them on a camper van trip to the Highlands of Scotland before I went completely insane. Even though I couldn't go rock climbing or mountaineering with them, I could still enjoy the fresh mountain air. It wasn't until the last night of the trip that my film came to me. My Dad thought it was a good idea to camp in the middle of nowhere for our last night. While the rest of my family slept, I was wide awake with pain from my knee. The wind buffeted the side of the van. As it howled outside, I became acutely aware of how isolated we were. If something or someone wanted to get into the van there wouldn't be an awful lot I could do. I began to get scared. The thought of being trapped in this tin can in the middle of the Cairngorms, isolated and alone. I was genuinely freaked out. Little did I know I had inadvertently discovered a premise and a location for my film. Once back in England, with two months left of my bed sentence, I began writing down some ideas for a film set in the Highlands of Scotland. Two years and nine drafts later I had a finished script. And that was the end of it. I had written a feature length script and I was pretty happy with it."

"I'd say WR is a psychological thriller with horror elements," states Corrie on whether the film is a thriller or a horror - or both. "As I was writing the script, it kept becoming more and more a thriller as the characters developed and the plot changed. The thing I love about Korean and Japanese Horror is that the actual plots have real meaning. You are always left scared, but also with a message. They have something to say in their horror films. It's not just a slasher/gore-fest that was cool for ninety minutes, but once it's over you've completely forgotten about the characters and the film. I wanted my film to have some resonance, meaning and message and leave the audience feeling more than just scared. So, in order to do this my film became increasing psychological. It keeps the audience guessing all the time right up until the climax. Don't worry though horror fans; there are still a lot of scares in it."

Team tactics

Working in the industry for quite a while meant Corrie had a whole host of contacts from camera



Firing up the drone for a take



assistants, make-up artists, sound guys and cinematographers to hand. Knowing that he was going to have to fund the film himself, he also knew he couldn't pay all these people their standard rates. Also, casting today is so much simpler, reckons the filmmaker. With websites like Casting Call Pro, Spotlight and Star Now it's easy to place an advert looking for very specific actors for your project. Corrie knew that, being a first time director, to try and get a named actor on board would be virtually impossible, so these websites were the way to go.

"We did one casting in Leeds, at Studio 81 and then one in London," he reflects. "You can hire a decent room in most places for around £100 per day. I had a mate at The Met Film School who let us borrow a room for a few hours for further meetings. What I didn't realise was how big the response was going to be. We were inundated with applications. Being that the film revolves around two central characters, their chemistry had to be key. And for the part of Rose, we needed a hugely strong actress. If this part wasn't cast correctly, it wouldn't matter how good the film looked, it would fail on the acting. I've seen too many films that look great, but the acting is dire. Luckily we found Carina Burrell. It was pretty clear from the start that she had everything that we were looking for. She was so passionate about every aspect of the project and her chemistry with the other lead actor David Wayman made her the perfect choice.

We even managed to get hold of Emmerdale actor, Bhasker Patel to come and do a cameo. Our final cast member was Glaswegian and all round hardman Cameron Jack, who was actually a replacement, as the original cast member had to drop out. Having never met Cam or even auditioned him it was a massive gamble bringing him on board, but I had no choice. It didn't matter anyway because he was amazing. It also turned out that he had been in The Dark Knight Rises and had done a scene with Gary Oldman, which he didn't mention much on set at all!"

Shooting in Scotland, however, must have presented cast and crew with some practical problems being as Corrie is based in Leeds… "I knew that whatever team I chose, my primary goal was that we all needed to get along," he says. "Shooting for three weeks in the Highlands of Scotland, living, eating and working all under the same roof, it was essential that we all got on. I knew it would be a huge undertaking. Most of my crew were from Yorkshire, so many people said to me ' Why don't you shoot in Yorkshire?' To which I replied ' Good question'. For me, it goes back to the night I had the idea for the film. The whole ethos around the film is Scottish-based. Sure, we have hills and lakes in Yorkshire, but nothing like the mountains and the lochs of The Highlands. I also knew that if I had been shooting in Yorkshire that all the crew could go home at night and feed themselves, which would have saved me a small fortune. But, once we set off to Scotland, we had made the right choice. The Cairngorms were to prove to be an essential element of the film, in more ways than one. We were all on this adventure together. It didn't seem like work or just another job.

Also, by shooting in Scotland, it made me plan everything meticulously. Once we had driven the eight hour drive to Aviemore, there was no turning around. We had to plan every scene, every shot, know exactly what kit we





needed, props and costumes. I had made cue cards for every scene in the film, which had on them the cast in the scene, plus what costume and props they needed, what time of day it was, shots for each location and where each location was. Again though, I now had to plan everything down to a tee. What crew I needed, what kit I could get my hands on, locations, accommodation, catering, cast. I had to plan it all so there would be no hidden costs."

Feeling the bite

By planning all of this, Corrie knew what he had to shoot each day and had a back up scene to shoot if the weather was bad. Amazingly, they had nearly three weeks of sunshine. "One of the major disadvantages of shooting in the Scottish Highlands is the midges," he moans. "We all got eaten alive. I'm going to credit the bloody things in the end titles. They're visible in so many scenes. I think the actors were incredible to be able to act scenes and let them crawl all over their faces without batting an eyelid. Trying to keep your camera rig still while they crawl on your body is a living nightmare. I remember shooting one scene in the woods and they were everywhere. I wanted to throw the camera down and leap into a loch. I think I got the record of 136 bites on my body."

As for film finance, from the beginning of university to the four years before making the film, Corrie had been trying to save up enough money to put a deposit down on a house. After writing the script he tried several avenues to get investment, but being a first time feature director with only a handful of broadcast credits to his name, he soon realised no one was going to bite (apart from the midges). So, he thought, that was it. He had managed to save up nearly £20,000 for a house deposit, but knowing that once he got a mortgage his life would be well and truly over he decided to use the deposit money to fund his film. "I knew I would never get a chance like this again and if it all went pear-shaped then at least I'll have tried," he laughs. "I'll be homeless, but have given it a go."


Lying down on the job

Choosing the kit

Kit-wise, Corrie always wanted something lightweight and compact, because they were going to be filming in remote locations with tricky access and ever-changing light conditions, so some kind of DSLR was always going to be the wise choice. Although shooting on the likes of the RED system or an Alexa would have been nice, the cost would have been way too much and not only for the camera, but also for the lenses, storage of the stock, workflow and crew to use the kit. In addition, for 90 per cent of the locations they were shooting at, logistically getting masses of bulky kit to the site would have been a nightmare. Armed instead with a DSLR, this wasn't an issue and they took their camera into lochs, climbed up mountains with it and then simply put it into a rucksack.

"DSLR-wise the first choice was a Canon 5D MKIII," reflects the

filmmaker. “I had used it on a few jobs and really liked its workflow. It shot at 90mbps and was an obvious choice. It wasn’t until three weeks before the start of the shoot that I was working on a job in Ibiza with my second unit director, who had recently bought a Lumix GH2. I was blown away with the camera. The image quality looked superb - really filmic. I had to shoot my film on that camera. Also, James the SUD, said he’d include it in his price so it became a no brainer.”

“In terms of the decision to shoot on the Lumix it was a case of what kit we could get our hands on really,” adds Corrie realistically. “I think it’s always a case of making the most of what you can get. There’s no point in worrying about getting your hands on the latest gear if it’s totally unrealistic, out of your price bracket, or beyond your skill, knowledge and experience. Get the best kit you can afford and know how to get the best out of it before you film - sounds like common sense, but you’d be amazed at how many people get this bit wrong. We had a Lumix, we liked the way it worked, we knew how to use it, so we chose it over the 5D. We also had more lenses for it than the 5D and it was a lighter rig, which would make it much more viable for the aerial footage we wanted to make. Kit should never stop you from being creative.”

A classy crew

“Being that 90 per cent of the crew were industry professionals, I was incredibly lucky with the fact that everyone knew what they were doing,” Corrie furthers. “Because most of them had never done a feature, although they all went out of their way to go above and beyond the call of duty. On a low-budget film, you don’t have a hundred runners and assistants carrying equipment. We all had to pull our weight. If this meant giving the make-up artist a rucksack and loads of equipment to carry up a mountain, then that’s what we had to do. This is why I always think it’s also crucial to pay your cast and crew something. There are only so many favours you can call in. Mundane tasks like this can dishearten people if they’re not being paid. I also think, as a leader, you have to set an example. If you show true dedication and grit, people tend to follow you. We had no fallouts, disagreements or any sulking on set, and there are many factors you can put this down to, including strong leadership, planning, accommodation and good food, but salary is also part of this.”

“Because I had no choice to plan the film to such detail, the



logistics of shooting it weren't too much of a problem," adds Corrie on the subject of those dreaded unforeseen scenario's cropping up during production. "Because most of the film was shot outdoors there was always the issue of weather, light, tourists and people turning up asking what were doing. We even printed off all the daylight hours we were there, so we could plan shots right up until sunset. When you're eight hours away from your main base and you're in the middle of nowhere, you have no choice but to get the shots in the bag. Once those three weeks are over, it's too late. There's no way I could have afforded to bring everybody back for pick ups. We also decided to bring a small edit suite with us and set it up at the accommodation, so we could do mini cuts of every scene each night. That way, we knew if we had the shots or if we need to do them again. This became invaluable, as we knew every day if we had the shots in the bag. It also makes the job a lot less stressful because after each day there is a sense of relief knowing that those shots are ticked off and I could forget about them."

Getting it out there

So, one wonders, where are they with the film right now? "We are now in the final stages of the edit of the film," adds Corrie on how production is moving along. "We have a couple of effects shots that need doing, getting rid of some brands on jumpers that we can't use and then colour correction, Foley, sound design and what have you. We're also preparing to submit the film to festivals around the world and looking for a distributor - we want our film to be seen. You never lose sight of the dream. My plan with this film was always to make it my calling card. I knew I wasn't going to be making a blockbuster or an award-winning film. I wanted to make a feature and get it seen by as many people as possible, something that not only looked great, but had a proper narrative, plausible characters with a thoughtful script. It was something I could show producers and other companies to help me get my next project."

"Horror is my passion," admits the filmmaker on whether he'll choose the genre for his next project. "I'd love to be able to make more horror films, but I know that to get recognised in this industry I need to be more versatile. I'm currently finishing my next script, which is actually a British drama set in Leeds/Bradford. So, hopefully at festivals I can hand out my latest script along with WR. I certainly love the filmmaking process and loved the team that I had working with me. I don't think I'd change much about the production process. Careful planning is so crucial to a smooth shoot. Also, don't get too far up your own arse. Involve your cast and crew in every aspect of the shoot. Get them involved in the creative process. I would hate to feel that even a runner on my shoot couldn't make some suggestions. As a first time filmmaker you need as much help as possible. Of course I'm not going to know it all. Make sure everyone on your team feels valued." ■







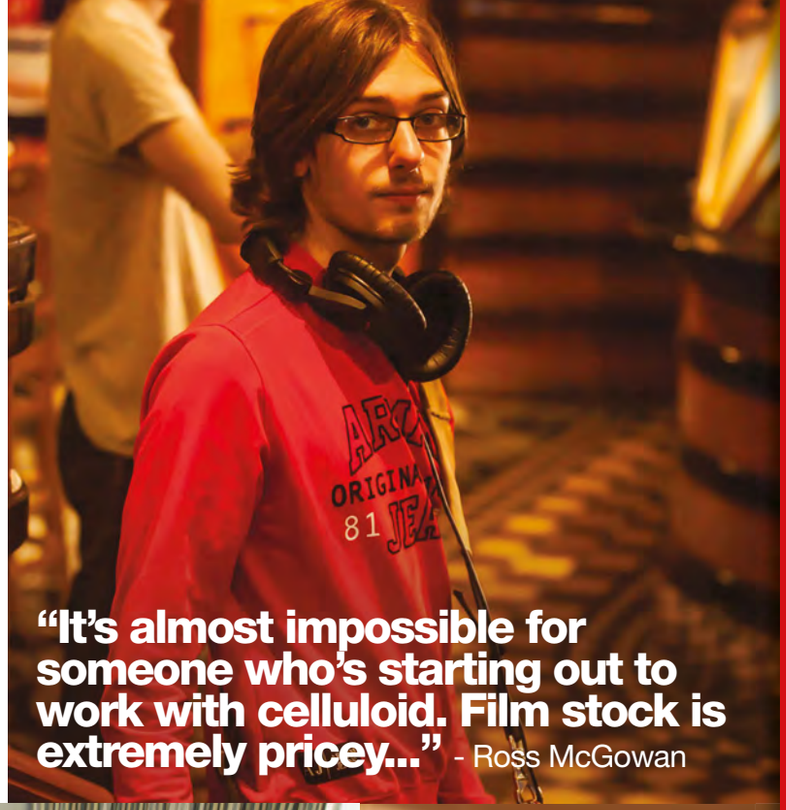
THE DIGITAL AGE

Ross McGowan is a young filmmaker who might have missed out on shooting with traditional film but reckons that digital is best if you're on a budget like he is…



"As a 21-year-old who considers himself to be a 'filmmaker', I'm always struck by the irony that I have never actually worked with celluloid," says Ross McGowan, picturing a scenario that is looking increasingly unlikely for many of the new breed of filmmakers working today.

"How can you be a filmmaker if you've never worked with film? Today, it's almost impossible for someone who's starting out to work with celluloid. Film stock is extremely pricey while the facilities to process and edit what you've shot are expensive and are becoming increasingly rare into the bargain. Professionals with more experience in the industry than myself have moved to digital because of the low cost and the ease. I remember one of them saying 'we are analogue natives in a digital age' on a car ride back from Croydon once. I, then, am a digital native in a digital age, and I wouldn't have it any other way. Having worked with digital, I have found that you can create a film with the highest production values for minimal costs, using cheap and affordable software."



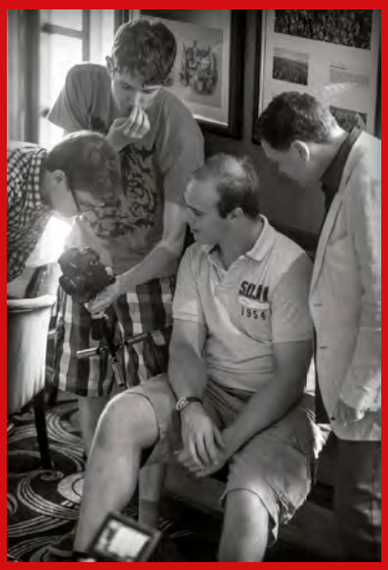
"It's almost impossible for someone who's starting out to work with celluloid. Film stock is extremely pricey..." - Ross McGowan





Ross has followed the demise of film with interest over the last few years it seems… "Digital filmmaking systems have been slowly taking over from film production since the invention of the first Editdroid system in 1984," he says, throwing a quick history lesson into the mix. "Which was later sold to Avid in 1993. Digital edit systems were first, followed by sound editing systems such as Protools and colour grading systems like DaVinci Resolve. The process of shooting with film stock and then digitising it therefore became pointless once we could shoot digitally. Cinema projection has become digital in the majority of cinemas in the UK, although unfortunately this means the decline of the projectionist. I actually made a documentary on the decline of projectionists during university, and while it was sad to hear how this role in cinema has become irrelevant, digital projection systems mean it's easier to show a wider variety of films and it's also easier for young filmmakers to get their work screened at local cinemas or for competitions. The irony of the documentary was that it was about the negative effects of digital cinema on the role of projectionists, though it was shot and edited digitally."





What happens next?

"So what does all of this mean for young filmmakers today?" questions Ross. "With good smartphones or tablets, and editing apps added into the deal, it's getting easy to make short films, more so than ever before. Therefore, more people are doing it. If you're serious about making films, the digital revolution means that high-end equipment and software is both easily available and cheaper to get your hands on nowadays. What's more, it's far easier to create a film with extremely high production values for minimal cost. To stand out above the crowd you'll therefore have to demonstrate your skillset and make sure that the end result looks professional, even when you probably won't have half the cash a professional film crew has at its disposal."

And that, conveniently, brings us on to Siria, a short film created by Ross on a miniscule budget while also managing to underline that great results can be achieved, just as long as you know how to approach your project. "I made a professional-looking short film for a fraction of the cost by using some of the great hardware and software available to me," reckons the filmmaker. "The first thing I should say is that I am a recent graduate of the Media Production course from the University of Lincoln. And here follows my plug for the course and the University: I gained a wealth of knowledge while studying for my degree from tutors who had experience within



“The thing that was the most important for me about university was meeting people who had the same enthusiasm”

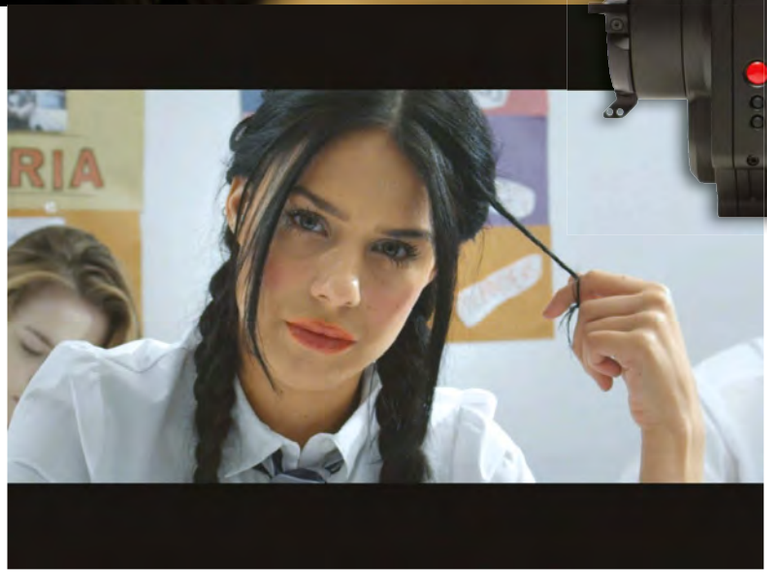
the industry. The course was practical and I got to make quite a few films there, work with industry-standard editing systems and produce some good work. The first class honours degree I graduated with wasn’t too bad either...

But, above all else, the thing that was the most important for me about university was meeting people who had the same enthusiasm, the same focus and the drive that I had, but who were skilled and knowledgeable in different areas to me. Unless you’re Robert Rodgriguez, you will need a crew, and you’ll want to work with people who share the same commitment as you do.”

The flying start

Ross got bitten by the bug early on and gained experience on his own shoots before realising that a more formal education about filmmaking would make sense and boost his skillset. “Most young filmmakers start off like I did, writing, directing, shooting and editing their own short films,” he says. “But as the projects get bigger, so do the crews. I found that you need to work with people who share the same enthusiasm for the work you do, are willing to learn and are also knowledgeable about the practicalities of resources available to young filmmakers today. If not, you’ll be working with people who’ll put in half the effort, drag the quality of your film down and, if you’re at university, share the same mark as you.”

That said, even if you choose to go your own way and avoid further education, Ross reckons there’s plenty of scope to move forwards... “You don’t have to go to university to network or find a crew,” he states. “Sites like Shooting People and Talent Circle means you can advertise for positions needed. I didn’t meet everyone I will ever want to work with just at university. It’s upsetting when you have to dump crew members, because these people are usually your friends, but their contribution to the film sometimes lets it down and, as a director, you have to strive for excellence in your work. You may not be able to achieve that with inferior people on board. As a director, you also want people to work with you because of the quality of your work, because hopefully you display some originality in your ideas.”





An advantage Ross had of working with people he knew from university was all because he studied on a media production course. He therefore knew people that did radio, design, animation, television and, most importantly, photography... “Most photographers or aspiring photographers I know own their own camera,” he adds. “They also have a variety of lenses and are knowledgeable about shooting video. Shooting on a DSLR camera is such a great option for young filmmakers and delivers more professional images than a fixed lens camera because you’ll have so much choice over optics and therefore be able to shoot a wide angle with a wide lens, a close-up with a long lens and you’ll also be able to get low depth-of-field and shallow focus too. There’s no easier way to give a film a more professional look than a low depth-of-field. This is an available option to young filmmakers and I’ve been really happy with the results when I’ve worked on films shot on an DSLR.”

Pushing the envelope

“With Siria, however, we wanted to push ourselves,” Ross goes on. “The DOP didn’t want to shoot on a DSLR, but on a Blackmagic, which shoots 2.5K Raw. The camera had a very affordable rental price, coming in at just over £500 for six days worth of shooting. I met Tom Anderson, (whose article The Red Demystified had recently been published in this magazine and who was the person who suggested I should write this article in the first place), at the Ritz Premiere, a small film night in Lincoln. We were introduced by DOP Jerome, who had worked on Tom’s film Magique, which was playing that night. My third year

film Stuffed was also playing. Tom had access to a RED Scarlett and was able to get it for the six days, along with a few lenses, for around £180 a day. We were able to save £170 from the usual rental price of the basic camera. Tom had experience working with the camera on Magique and so we eventually chose this camera to shoot on over the Black Magic.

While we decided to shoot on the RED, knowing people that could handle photography still mattered though. Why? Well, if photographers own their own kit, then they'll have a few lenses. The Scarlett we had access to had a Canon lens mount and even if you were to rent these lenses, they would still be the cheaper option. Having photographer friends therefore means that you potentially have access to a wide range of optics, but hopefully for free. For Siria, we asked two photographers if they wanted to do on set photography first, before asking to use their lenses for the shoot. As they were involved in the project and wanted the film to turn out the best it could be, they then let us use them for free."



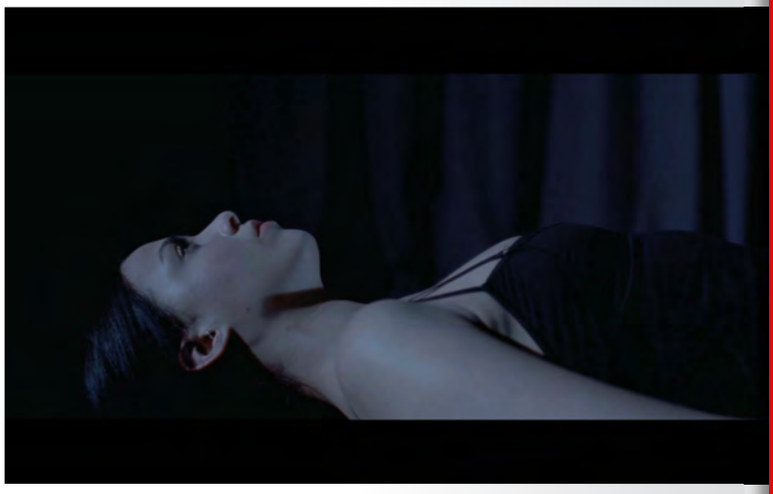


Hard at work on the edit

Having access to a professional-level camera also made the filmmaking process all the more exhilarating, according to Ross… "Shooting on the Scarlett was great," he enthuses. "The 4K Raw images looked beautiful and gave us a lot of potential in post regarding colour correction and, if we needed to crop the image, it'd still be good quality. But we didn't have access to a Steadycam, and to rent one with an operator was out of our price range. So, again, by networking and using the resources that I knew people had, I brought in a friend, Thomas McKie, who I knew owned a Canon 5D with the Magic Lantern firmware and a Glidecam. The Glidecam allowed us to shoot tracking shots or footage that would only be available to us if we had a Steadycam. What's more, because of the firmware, this was all subsequently shot in Raw. We were able to cut this in with the Scarlett footage and the difference wasn't too noticeable. The different resolutions, 4K and 1080, could have been an issue, but this potential problem was fixed in post. I'll expand on that a little bit later."

Sound advice

While the camera and lenses situation was quickly sorted, Ross also wanted to ensure top-notch sound for his project… "The most crucial piece of advice I can give to young filmmakers is do not overlook sound," he says. "The audience will forgive a bad image but they will not forgive bad sound. During my time at university, sound would be the role designated to the person who didn't want to put too much effort in on set, and the sound mix would be done by the editor a day or so before the deadline. The best decision I made was to work with audio production students on my third year film Stuffed and my key piece of advice for any filmmaker looking to improve the quality of their output is to work with a decent sound recordist and sound mixer. In my case, we had a pair who did both, who studied at the university and therefore knew the equipment and also had access to it. Film is thought of as a visual medium, but you'd be surprised how much good sound recording added to a well thought out sound design can increase the quality of your work tenfold. The shoot for Siria was done before we graduated in September 2013 and therefore we were able to use a mixer, which a tutor at the university had (all we had to do was insure it), as well as equipment that the two of them owned, including their own microphones."





Post-production is another area of filmmaking that can be tackled easily if you're short on funds, or so reckons Ross... "With software like Final Cut and Adobe Premiere Pro, now the post-production process can be reduced to a single computer," he says. "Aside from the cost of the software, you don't have to worry about renting editing suites, sound theatres or a colour grading suite and end up paying through the nose for it. This is a good way to work at a semi-professional level."



“Creating Siria proved that working with digital technology is perfect for the youth of today”

“However, what happens if you want to raise the standard of your work while still keeping the costs down?” poses the filmmaker. “After the Siria shoot, the majority of the crew went back to their respective homes all over the country. I was left with a hard drive of footage, which I could not edit. The size of the files were simply too big for me to do so on my MacBook Pro. The editor, Tom, lived 100 miles away from university, where we, as alumni, would be able to use the Avid editing suites they had that could handle the footage. Neither Tom nor I had the money to go and live back in Lincoln for a few weeks to edit and, with a part-time job to hold down, I didn’t have the availability for this option either.

So how did we solve this problem? Tom invested in a new computer, which would be able to handle the footage. The cost of this didn’t come out of the budget, but rather his pocket as he knew, like a professional, that having his own editing system would be better for him in the long run. He decided to use Lightworks, which is available for free, but we spent £40 on a year’s membership to get Lightworks Pro in order to enjoy all the features of the software.

As he and I live 40 odd miles apart, as well as having our personal commitments, it wasn’t feasible for me to spend the three and a half weeks of editing living at Tom’s house. But by utilising software, which is free and easily available, I was able to be kept in the loop all the way through the edit. Dropbox was what made working this way possible. Without free programs like Dropbox and WeTransfer we would never have been able to keep the costs down in post-production while still producing a professional-looking end product. He would send me cuts of the film





or particular scenes, I would make notes, send them back to him, and he would then make the changes. I was at Tom’s twice during the edit, after he had completed the first rough cut and to get the picture lock, that was it.”

Sound and vision

“While I rarely saw Tom, I never even met the composer,” laughs Ross on the soundtrack scenario. “Jesper is a Danish composer who I was put in touch with by a mutual friend who had worked with him before. Whilst I will admit I spent just under a tenth of the budget on the score, an original soundtrack adds to what feeling you want to convey to the audience within certain scenes, as well as adding to the professionalism of the final film. Especially when you don’t have the money to buy music rights. The score was composed after he and I talked on Skype and after he had received the final cut via Dropbox. He would

send me experiments during the editing process and give his opinion on the edits, which was appreciated. He composed as we were doing the sound mix, he would then send me each track as he was working on it, and I would give my opinion on what worked, what didn't and what direction I wanted to go in with the soundtrack, all via Skype. It was a relatively productive and stress-free working relationship considering I've never met the guy in person. And, a working relationship only possible because of digital technology."

And, once again, access to the university facilities added to the money saving production capacity… "As crew members Deniss and Galani lived in Lincoln, they were able to use the university's sound theatre," adds Ross. "They were alumni, so they had to arrange times around when students were working, in order to work on the film. They both have Protools and Logic at home too, meaning they were able to work on the film while they were not in the university. They worked to a low-resolution version of the film sent to them via Dropbox. I made three trips to see them over the four weeks of sound editing, including the final mix, where they received Jesper's score and added it to the mix. When I was happy with the mix, they exported the soundtrack as a single OMF file and sent it straight to Tom."




Digital is definitely the way forward

Overcoming hurdles

With the end in sight, Ross was still thrown one or two curveballs along the way… "Jerome, the DOP, wanted to colour correct the film, but he didn't have a graphics card to support the RED footage," chuckles the filmmaker. "So he invested in one himself. He used DaVinci Resolve Lite, a free version of the professional colour grading system. While Lite lacked some of the features of a purchased copy, it worked just fine for us. Having shot in Raw, we were given huge possibilities during this stage to manipulate the colour palette in order to to achieve the look we wanted. One of the features missing from Lite is exporting in 4K though. As we had already cropped shots in the edit, we decided to export all the colour corrected footage in 1080p and the results looked gorgeous. This also meant that that we could switch between the RED and the DSLR footage without the resolution changing. The colour graded AAF files were so big though that Jerome had to carry them on a hard drive to Tom's! We replaced the audio track with the OMF, making sure it was still in sync, then replaced the video on the Lightworks timeline with the colour corrected AAF files, which did cause some syncing issues that had to be resolved. The end result feels professional because we were able to use professional equipment for either a low cost, or for free."



So then, mission accomplished and with not one tiny shred of conventional film in sight along with production being fully covered with a pretty tiny budget. Proof once again that it can be done if you are inventive and use your own initiative… "I've never worked with celluloid and I don't have a burning desire to do so," Ross reiterates. "Creating Siria proved that working with digital technology is perfect for the youth of today." ■



ASK THE FILMMAKER





Sean J Vincent is a professional who faces filmmaking challenges every day of his career. Here he takes some time out to answer a few of your questions…

Water works

Is there any way of safeguarding my camera and equipment against the elements? We've been having a nightmare with all of the recent rain systems rolling in as we film outdoors, so is there a failsafe system for protecting kit such as cameras and monitors?
Jane Waters, Enfield

SJV: Water is not good for your gear and keeping it out is hard. But, some cameras are weatherproof… not many, but some. I'd still rather use a weather protection system though. You can buy custom-made weather covers for most popular cameras. They usually have clear plastic sections so you can see and operate the buttons on your camera and Velcro flaps for feeding your cables through. I use a generic rain cover. It's just a sheet of waterproof material with a draw-string that I slip over my camera. It's not perfect, but it doesn't let water in and will let you finish a shot or scene before you take cover. The best plan if you need to shoot in heavy rain for an extended period is to try and keep the camera in the dry. Shoot from the back of a van, out of a car window or even use an easy-up tent to shoot from (assuming there are no strong winds). This way, both you and your camera will be dry and safe.

Case in point

Do you know of any easy way of transporting filmmaking kit from A to B? It might seem like a silly question but we've found that as we've built up our equipment stock, we end up having real trouble getting it around. Do you know if there are specific flightcase manufacturer's for camera and kit, for example, like those ones that bands use on tour?
Sue Bryant, Southampton

SJV: Flightcases are a good way to protect kit on the move. They come in all shapes and sizes and you can get the foam inside them cut to any shape to accommodate cameras, lenses and other equipment. But, they really add to the weight of everything. A better alternative is Pelicases. These hard ABS plastic cases are lighter than flightcases, but just as strong and you'll usually find camera and filming equipment is transported in them for just that reason. Traditional flightcases work better when you need something custom made, but for everything else, check out Pelicases.



Sky high

What are your thoughts on drones for aerial filming? We've been reading a lot about them, particularly in Digital FilmMaker magazine, but wonder if it's worth the outlay to buy one outright. They appear to deliver great results, especially if you can't afford to hire a



Cheap thrill

My son has a keen interest in filmmaking and wants some kit to get started. So, can you advise on a basic and hopefully affordable setup that will cover most bases? He can always add to it later on if need be.
Nick Harris, Stevenage

SJV: There's never been a better time to experiment with filmmaking. It's cheaper than ever before and the quality far exceeds what was possible only a few years ago. To get started, a DSLR like the Canon 600D (around £450) will give him the ability to shoot full HD and use a variety of lenses, but he can start with the included kit lens. Editing can be done on pretty much any PC or Mac these days. If he's using a Mac, iMovie is a good place to start and, on the PC, Windows Movie Maker or maybe Adobe Premiere Elements. A basic tripod will do to start and he can upgrade as and when he wants to take things further. Reading DFM is a must for beginner's…loads of advice and tips!



helicopter, but what are the pros and cons of such a dramatic move?
Andy Tennant, Sunderland



SJV: I spent two years with my pilot friend Neil Jones developing drones for filming before they really (excuse the pun) 'took off'. We were shooting with them before stabilised gimbal mounts were available, so we learnt every trick in the book to get good footage. But, there is a big problem with using drones for filming. It's not legal in the UK to stick a camera on a UAV and fly it without a licence. The CAA (Civil Aviation Authority) has rightly required people to take a course, which covers safe use, flight planning and logging and a practical flight exam. Without this, you are not legally allowed to film from an aerial vehicle. There is some debate over whether you can film for your own purposes, but the basic rule is this: put a camera on a UAV and it becomes a legal issue and if you charge for your services - even more so. There are so many people operating illegally at the moment that it could be banned altogether at any time. Even with a license, you must do a flight plan that avoids flying over people, residential areas and roads. So, as you can see - this already narrows down the advantages we all hoped drone cameras would bring. My advice is this: If you want to make a business out of aerial camera work, do the course, get a license and be safe and legal. If you just need a few shots for a film you're planning, hire someone who has the qualification and experience to do it for you. If you crash an unlicensed drone into someone and hurt them, you might be in some very serious trouble.

Bargain basement

Where's the best place to look for used kit that doesn't cost the earth? I'm a keen filmmaker but want to get a better camera, and all those sundry extras, so is it wise to look to online outlets for bargains or visit shops in person? Have you ever bought second-hand kit and would you recommend it?
Leonie Worth, Marlborough



SJV: I've bought lenses secondhand on eBay and at various market stalls and camera shops. It's always a bit of a gamble, but most of them have

Flight plan

When you go overseas on flights and suchlike, what do you tend to do with your kit? We have a shoot planned for the near future over in Europe and it'll probably involve low-cost airlines in order to get there, which might actually make it even more of a challenge. Have you got any top tips for filmmakers who are travelling?
Dave Short, Maidenhead

SJV: Low cost airlines and equipment don't go together very well. I've had things in very solid flightcases come off a flight completely wrecked before. And sometimes things just don't ever come back. So, with that in mind, I would always keep my camera, lenses and other valuable kit in my hand luggage. Most cameras break down into pretty small bits these days and there is a selection of camera bags that would be okay for hand luggage. If you get a coat with some really big pockets, you can carry your lenses that way. It sounds mad, but there are no weight restrictions on your coat. If your kit were too big to travel this way, I'd stump up for a better airline or rent the gear locally. Air Freight is another option, but it's expensive and your gear will need to travel a few days before you do and arrive back a few days after you do.







been really good bargains. You can get cameras on eBay too, but I'd always go and see it in person before handing over any cash. Some camera shops like H Preston Media carry a good range of secondhand cameras and do trade-in deals, so that's always an option. With digital video cameras that capture to solid-state media, there are rarely any moving parts, so they are a much safer bet on the secondhand market than their tape-fed predecessors.

Ear candy

Do you have some top tips for ensuring that my soundtrack is in perfect tune with my footage? We've had a go at creating some Foley effects recently, but surprisingly they ended up detracting from the end result. Is it a fine line between enhancing your audio and ruining it entirely? What's the best advice?

Rob Harris, Cannock

SJV: I learnt the hard way that Foley can be overdone. My advice is to work out where the music is going to go first, and then work on the Foley after that. There's no point spending days or weeks on Foley for a scene, which then can't be heard over the music. Work on the obvious first. The big things - doors opening/closing, footsteps, gunshots, explosions and then work backwards to the small things like clothing noise when you know where the soundtrack is quite enough for them to be heard. Cinematic sound is all about exaggerating the bits you want to really impact the audience. Explosions and gunshots are always ridiculously loud and over the top, cars always sound amazing and anytime anyone ever loads a gun, it sounds like a canon being loaded. Getting the mix right is tough… watch lots of action films and take it all in. A/B the soundtrack from an action film with yours.



Don't watch the picture, just listen… you'll learn a lot. My general rule is to emphasise the important bits to the story and play down the rest. A trick I have employed a few times is to have a completely silent section where there is no Foley all of a sudden… it can be quite surreal and create more interest than overdoing it sometimes.

Road trip

We're considering a low-budget action film for a project that's coming up and would like to film some of it from cars. Well, actually on cars as they hurtle around fields and what not. Have you any advice for us on what kind of kit to use, how to secure it to the vehicles and what potential downsides doing this might have on the quality of the footage. For example, how can we ensure that the footage is steady?

Dave Short, Maidenhead

SJV: Luckily, the feature I've just shot had this exact same issue to tackle. We had lots of fast driving to capture. We bought a decent two-sucker car mount and we didn't buy the cheapest… we bought the best. You don't want the camera coming off because a) it's dangerous and could hurt someone and b) because you don't want to have to fund a new camera rig. This rig allowed us to mount the camera on the bonnet, on the roof, on the boot or on the sides and it was as solid as a rock. We then ran a long HDMI cable in through the car window and captured to an Atomos Ninja, which meant we could see what we were shooting and if the worst did happen, we'd have the footage safe inside the car.

The next obvious advice is getting a GoPro Camera. We used a GoPro Hero 3 for the more 'dangerous' shots… in other words, an inch from the road and very close to the wheels. A protective cage like the one from GenusTech will allow you to mount the camera much more steadily and securely than the usual GoPro car mount, which we found allowed the camera to shake.

Most of the car footage was pretty stable, but the shots that did have a tad more shake than we wanted, we used the Stabilize feature in Final Cut Pro X to fix it.





Finally, always use safety ropes/bungee cords to catch your camera rig just in case the rig does fall. Use camera tape to stick your cables to the car…anything that isn't stuck down when you start will only get less secure once you start driving. Make sure your production insurance will cover this kind of use. The police might stop you if you have cameras mounted on your car, but as long as they are mounted safely, you should be okay. The driver should never be doing anything other than driving… someone else must be watching the cameras and dealing with the monitoring. If you're going to be doing any kind of dangerous driving, do it on private land and make sure you know what you are doing. Accidently rolling a car isn't fun if it trashes your camera and injures your driver and your camera operator. It sounds boring, but safety first. If in doubt, hire a professional.



reverb. Lastly, add a touch of compression. Something along the lines of 2:1 ratio just to even out the level of the dialogue. There are lots of different software packages that do this kind of work, but the most popular (and, in my opinion, best) are Pro Tools from Avid, LogicX from Apple and Cubase or Nuendo from Steinberg. I prefer LogicX, just because I've been using it for a long time and it integrates with FCPX so well, but the market leader for post audio is Pro Tools. It's an expensive option, but very reliable and most of the pros use it for a reason. ■



If you can't get a boom in there without getting in shot, it'll have to be either a lav mic or a boom mic hidden on the set

Base levels

We're finding it increasingly easy to get our sound right on location, but do you have a chosen way of processing it when you get back to base? We're not so hot on the post-production side of things and are trying to get to grips with different software systems. Is there one that does it all for you?

Steven Jones, Pewsey

SJV: Audio post-production is a very complicated subject and covering it all here is impossible, but I'll try to give you a few pointers. Generally, when mixing dialogue, you will want to remove everything below 90Hz. Below this is just rumble and stuff that doesn't include anything in the vocal range. Experiment with boosting frequencies somewhere around 7 to 8 Khz to give the dialogue a little 'lift'. Adding digital reverb can help to blend the different mics from different takes together, but be very subtle… it needs to be ambience rather than



Audio dynamite

How do you know what kind of microphone setup you'll need when you go on a shoot? Is there a set way of working this out or is it simply down to experience and you gradually get a feel for what kind of kit you'll need to take with you?

Rob Harris, Cannock

SJV: It always depends on what the sound requirements are. I will always find this out before a shoot, but to be safe, I often take a selection of mics with me. There are two basic kinds of mic for most video/film work. Firstly, there are shotgun mics. These are very directional mics that can either mount on the camera or on a boom pole and need to be positioned as close to the performer as possible while remaining out of shot. The second kind of mic is a lav mic. These are tiny clip-on mics that can either be worn on the lapel, collar or tie for interviews or hidden under clothing for drama work. A combination of both of these will give you a really good shot at getting some great audio. Choosing the right mic depends on the location more than anything. Is there a lot of background noise? If so, a very close lav mic will work better. Is the room very reverberant (has a lot of echo)? Again, this would make a boom mic less suitable. Is the shot a really long shot? If you can't get a boom in there without getting in shot, it'll have to be either a lav mic or a boom mic hidden on the set or location. Microphones are small…so take enough to cover all the possible situations. Don't forget things like mic cables, suitable stands and plenty of clips too.












DE IN ITALY







PRODUCER INTERVIEW

LOST IN TRANSIT



Digital FilmMaker talks to Marius Smuts about the making of In Transit, his adventurous new feature-length outing

It's always refreshing to be contacted by a filmmaker with something a little bit different to offer and that's exactly the case with In Transit. Currently in post-production, the independent feature is the brainchild of Marius Smuts. Armed with a budget of £9,000, the movie was filmed on the RED MX over the last couple of years on location in London. It's the story of Matt, a quirky daydreamer who's stuck in that 20-something malaise, his bonkers housemates and a love interest by the name of Jess. The only problem being that Jess has a boyfriend and Matt has feelings for his lifelong friend Tina.

At the same time, Matt is an aspiring writer who spends his time working on a comic book called Rabbit. It's a tale of a half-rabbit/half-man character who travels through time correcting the errors of mankind. In short, the film bills itself as a feature that deals with real life relationships along with lost and perhaps new opportunities.

"Before and while I was studying film, I was living in a shared house and then again when I moved back to London after university," says the filmmaker, reflecting on what it was that inspired the film. "It all started with things that would happen in these houses, or stories that other people would tell me about their experiences of living in a shared house. So I drew inspiration from my surroundings. If someone said something funny, or if I had a conversation with someone that I thought was interesting, I would write it down and work it into the plot. I've lived with some interesting people throughout the years, so there was a lot in inspiration for the characters. Some people would fight, some were eccentric, and some people would fall in love. It was like a bubble of activity, so for me, I wanted to take a closer look at that and put a comedic spin on it. The characters in the film aren't specifically based on any people I know as such, but are more of an unusual mix of them all."





Taking a break



A people thing

"I've always been interested in the interaction between people, the more intimate moments of one-on-one conversation and the silences in between," he continues. "The main story is basically a love triangle, between one guy and two girls. I think the back and forth of this kind of situation creates a lot of space for comedy and drama. I'm very influenced by love triangle films like Truffaut's Jules et Jim and Bernardo Bertolucci's Dreamers. There's something very essentially human about these films that I think makes them so relatable. I think a lot of people have been stuck in a situation where they aren't sure about their relationship and there's someone else in the picture. Although, In Transit is more of a comedy, I tried to capture some of that human depth. Visually, the film is very colourful, as the main character is an illustrator. That's a theme I wanted to carry through the film, by making the images colourful, like a comic book. I grew up doing painting and drawing, not that I was ever really good at it. I also grew up reading comics, so the colours are always very vibrant."

"Basically, In Transit is about Matt trying to find his place in the world," Mathius explains. "He lives in London and, like many other Londoners, he often loses focus on what is important in life. He pursues an artistic vision but he's stuck in a mundane job and career prospects are few and far between. He dreams of getting his illustrated children's book published while he is also dating various people and looking for love. Moving into a new house share, he meets Jason, a wisecracking tough guy who is obsessed with 1980s action films, the nocturnal and morbid Bazz who is fascinated with the macabre and then Jess, who is career focused and sexually assertive. Along with his lifelong arty friend Tina, who supports him with all his far-fetched projects and ideas, he is confronted with the reality of being a late blooming grown-up and the reality of life. Throughout the story, Matt goes on dates and takes a journey of discovery to find what kind of person he wants to be. The film is about being stuck in that phase where people feel the need to find their place and the mistakes they make trying to get there. That's why the film is called In Transit. A film needs to be identifiable, while not being overtly familiar in order to keep the viewer interested."





Work in progress

Mathius and his team finished the grade around the end of last November and then the composer added the score. It was the first time he'd seen the graded edit along with music. The filmmaker is a strong believer that the music is vital for creating the right mood and enhancing the comedic timing of the edit. "We're almost finished with post-production," he goes on. "The audio is being mixed in a 5.1 audio studio and the title sequence is being finished. To add to the theme that the main character is an illustrator, we are doing an animated title sequence to establish the vibe of the film straight away. We started shooting around a year ago, doing a two week block for principal photography, then went back in the middle of the year to shoot some pick up scenes as well a few establishing and exterior shots. Filming for the most part went smoothly - the actors knew





the time for the better. It's very important to have professional or experienced actors on your team. I was insecure about the script until we had a read through, and the actors brought it to life. It was a great and reassuring moment. Everyone worked so well together - we usually had 10 to 11 hour days - and that is quite short in comparison to other shoots I've done. We did three night shoots for restaurant and bar scenes and in that time we would have to dress the set, block and shoot. It worked out well in the end though."

Thankfully, Mathius and his crew had a budget of sorts to work with. While £9,000 may sound like a lot, it can disappear pretty quickly on a shoot… "The film was financed by friends and family, mainly through a crowdsourcing website, which is one of the greatest things to come into existence for an independent filmmaker," he says. "It can be difficult to publicise a movie and to get people interested. You can have the greatest pitch and story, but that doesn't necessarily mean you'll get any attention as there's a lot of competition. In the end, family and friends play a big part when it comes to financing something this small. I've put money toward other people's projects and they have put money into this, so filmmakers sometimes help each other out. People did us a lot of favours with free locations too. We usually hire equipment from the same folks and they gave us a massive discount. Plus, our camera operator and associate producer Suki Mok runs a photography and film company (Kii Studios) and he helped with securing the bar and restaurant locations for free and added some financial backing. The £9,000 went mainly toward actors expenses, kit hire, props/production design and catering in the main block of production. Then, hiring an editor, colourist and dubbing mixer for post. But, a lot of people gave their time for free working on this project, for which I am extremely thankful."

"When filming, I find it always turns out slightly differently to what you imagine, and a lot of the time for the better" - Marius Smuts

their lines off by heart and my production team were incredibly efficient. The biggest issue we had was a lack of daylight when we shot the main part of the film so pickups were needed.

When filming, I find it always turns out slightly differently to what you imagine, and a lot of



The professional edge

Adding extra weight to the production was their use of the RED MX, which the filmmaker found to be a real boon, alongside the odd Canon or two… "Yes, we used a RED MX for the bulk of the shoot," he says. "Then we also used a Canon 60D for a couple of crane shots, as the one we had would never hold a RED MX. The RED is so heavy once you've added the Cooke Varotal lens that it gets a bit weighty for handheld shots. My DOP, Joao Da Silva, initially wanted to shoot on the Blackmagic Camera (which he had ordered three moths before), but there were delays with the release of the camera and literally the day before the shoot, we secured the RED MX. We've used the RED EPIC before on music videos and commercials and it is much more workable that the MX, purely because of the weight and size. When the Blackmagic arrived we were able to shoot the exterior shots with that, which after a grade matched quite well with the RED footage. We were able to do more tracking shots with the BMC too."

Having good kit is important, reckons the filmmaker, but having someone who knows how to use it properly is even more important. Mathius says he's seen films shot



on DSLRs that look better than when someone shoots with a more expensive camera, purely because the lighting is bad, the edit isn't right or the grade isn't good. But, he adds, if you have good kit and someone who uses it like an extension of themselves, it becomes magical. "With the RED MX, we were able to shoot 4K,


Keeping an eye on the RED



"With the Blackmagic Camera, we used a 16mm and an 85mm Samyang cine lens, which are both rather inexpensive"

which looks amazing, especially after the grade," he enthuses. "The colours are rich and the resolution is incredible. The downside of using the MX is that we didn't have the mobility that we would have had with the Blackmagic Camera. For instance, the slider and crane we had was strong enough for a DSLR or BMC, but not the RED MX. So we filmed those shots with a DSLR, or dropped the shot completely if we felt it wouldn't match the RED footage. I am pleased we shot with the RED though; it gave our colourist a lot of options on the grade because it shoots Raw. You can do a lot more without losing quality."

Additional kit

A lot of the equipment was purloined from Kii Studios, including some Redheads, combined with the DOP Joao's own lights, which meant they had decent illumination at their disposal. However, they also hired a 2.5 HMI to get a bright sunny day effect. Added to that, the crew also used LED's, a couple of small ARRI Blondes and a Kino Flo Diva for some fill light. "The main lens we used for the RED was the Cooke 20-100mm T3.1, which is a huge lens on an already big camera," says Mathius, elaborating on their kit choices. "It's a great lens though and you can go very wide or close up. With the Blackmagic Camera, we used a 16mm and an 85mm Samyang cine lens, which are both rather inexpensive. Soundwise, our recordist, Chris Kouzaris, used his own kit, which consists of a Sound Devices 744t and Sennheiser 416 mic in a Rycote S-series mount. He also used an Audio Technica wireless mic as a safety option when needed. Every now and then he'd use a sound blanket (if he wasn't getting the evil eye from our DOP for casting shadows!). Having good sound kit is very important for your film because if you plan on exhibiting it anywhere, you want it to be loud and clear."

As is often the case, the team was relatively small, with ten people on set as part of the crew, plus Mathius directing, Chris on sound and Mathius's brother Etienne who pitched in and did the catering for them for the duration of the shoot. Good food is essential for keeping morale up on a shoot reckons the filmmaker. "I had worked with everyone before and enjoyed it, so it was a great experience to put them together on this," says Mathius. "Joao, our DOP, has twenty years experience. I met him while I was doing my post grad and we often work together. Along with Suki and David Myers (the gaffer), they were an excellent camera team. Our make-up artist, Emslie Mills, I first met in 2009 on another film and she is very experienced having worked on many features and music videos. She was doing Kick Ass 2 for a day and then came straight onto this for a night shoot one day, so she had an almost 24-hour day!



Our production designer, Nina Topp (It's a Lot) is someone I met working on a commercial. We went for drinks after that shoot and I told her I was going to make a feature. I think she thought I was joking and said yes to working on it. I try and use her whenever she is available as she's very dedicated and a true professional. When we were discussing the look for the film she just got it, she knew exactly what I was going for and added her own spin to the design. I think production design is something that is very important for creating the look and feel of the film - especially on something like this where colours emote feeling. It's something that I overlooked when I first started making short films. The most difficult person to find was someone to do the artwork featured in the film. Shan Hon is responsible for doing the comic book images. It was so difficult to get the right kind of artist and he used a style that I really liked.

During post-production, we had an editor, Valentina Rizzuto who I met on another shoot plus a colourist, Richard Jephcote who really pushed the colours to their full potential. We also hired a visual FX artist, Ogodinife Okpue, to do the animated title sequence. The score is almost all-original music by Maz Iannone. We went for a folky and at times rock soundtrack. I really like the sound of an accordion, so he used that quite a bit too."



Assembling the cast

"Our lead actor, Nicholas Shaw (Foyle's War/Land Girls) who plays Matt, was the first person cast," furthers Mathius on how the actors came on board. "To add to the irony of his casting, his then-girlfriend/now-wife was my housemate at the time when I was writing the film. He was busy doing Hamlet in London and whenever he did a show, I would go and watch him so we became friends. I asked him to do the film and he said he'd look at the script! Luckily he liked it enough and got involved. One of our other leads, Fiona Rene (Snatch 'n' Grab/Fortune Cookies) from Texas originally came in to read for another role Tina, the shy girl in the love triangle. But, when I met her she was so bubbly and intriguing we asked her to read for the role of Jess, which is the more dominant of the two female characters. Needless to say, she got the role almost straight away. I've since worked with her on a short film, Cushion Apocalypse for the 48 Hour Film Project, where we won the audience award, mainly due to her natural comedic timing.

It was difficult to find the right actress to play Tina as I wanted someone who was funny, quirky and would have natural chemistry with Nicholas/Matt as they are meant to be lifelong friends. We auditioned a few girls, but couldn't find anyone who fit, until Nicholas recommended Melissanthi Mahut who he had done some Shakespeare with in the past. I was so happy we found her; she was perfect for the role, and very charming. She reminded me of Kate Winslet in Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, which is one of my favourite films. I met Jerry Marwood (Cushion Apocalypse) who plays Bazz through work, and he is probably the funniest character in the film. Johnny Sachon (Cloud 9/Casualty) rounds out the main cast members as the wisecracking Jason. I met Johnny on a short and we got on really well. I always thought he'd be perfect for the role and luckily he had just come off another shoot, so had a bit of time to help me out."



Work experience

Mathius initially completed a BA in Film and MA in TV Production, doing both at University College Falmouth in Cornwall. When he finished his studies he subsequently moved up to London. The first project he did in the capital was as first assistant director on a UK/Chinese film and theatre production called Piccadilly



Revisited for the Royal Opera House. It was there where he met Calita Rainford (Return to the house on Haunted Hill/Unfinished Song) who would go on to do a role in In Transit as Becky. "Since then I've worked as a first assistant director on commercials, music videos, promos and short films," he explains, charting his career to date. "Mostly on the smaller scale of the spectrum. I also did a few jobs as a production assistant and runner on some TV shows. In 2013, I co-wrote and co-directed Cushion Apocalypse for which we won two awards at the 48 Hour Film Project. I've written, directed and worked on various short films that have been shown at festivals around the world too. Ideally, I want to create more feature-length stories. My reason for studying film is that I wanted to make feature films and always said I wanted to shoot my first feature before I turned 30 and I have achieved that."

Although the filmmaker hadn't done any features before In Transit, which makes the end result all the more commendable… "I've worked on two other feature films, not in any creative capacity though," laughs Mathias. "I worked as a boom operator and third assistant director on the film Highway to Hell for three months when I finished my degree. That was where I met Emslie Mills for the first time. It was the most surreal experience of my life as we filmed in Cornwall on a farm for six days a week, fourteen hours a day. Everyone on that set became like a zombie and you'd

get stuck in this bubble where you didn't see anyone else for months. It was a great experience though and I met some really good people on that set. I also got to spend time with actors I grew up looking up to like Michael Madsen, Jeff Fahey and Sylvester McCoy. I also did some DIT work on the independent supernatural thriller Parallel Lines. More just transferring files and making sure the footage was usable. In Transit is a great learning experience and a reassurance that if you want to do something, anything can be achieved if you put your mind toward it and surround yourself with positive and creative people."

The biggest challenge was, sure enough, lack of money, mainly because people were working for very low fees or as a favour, explains the filmmaker. "They have other priorities and you have to always wait, which can become frustrating at times," recalls Mathius. "I've learnt to be lot more patient after making this film. But I definitely want to keep everything closer to home next time. Also, because of that lack of funding, you can't just pay someone to do certain jobs so you take on a lot more. It's difficult for people to take an extended period of time off without getting paid as they



lose their income. So because I was doing more work than usual, it became very stressful. I am all for sharing duties though. The more input you get, the better the end product. However, because we used the RED, we had to change the style we were going to film in. I initially wanted lots of handheld shots, but we ended up using a lot locked off shots with the tripod. Of course, we could track, pan and tilt, but sometimes handheld helps to create a more authentic feel."

The marketing machine

Promotion remains perhaps the biggest mountain to climb right now though… "Getting people interested in watching this tiny little film is extremely difficult," says Mathius. "The fact is, there is so much competition out there for filmmakers, that there just isn't enough money to fund every project. And, if you are going to wait for someone to come up to you with a £100,000 to make a film then you will wait forever. And, if you make your own low or no budget film, there's no telling if anyone would even be interested in seeing it. You just have to have the passion and drive and believe someone wants to see the story you are telling. Although I know if I were trying to make this film in the 1990s for the same price, it would not have happened - the technology just wasn't available or was too expensive. So at least we were able to make the film. You can promote your movie on social media and I guess it's about networking as well as luck as to whether your film makes any noise out there. Big Hollywood films spend millions on marketing, so it's difficult to compete."

Nevertheless, the filmmaker is justifiably proud of the project and hopes that getting In Transit into some festivals might help give them the push they need… "At the moment, I'm just really proud that this journey is almost complete," he says. "I hope we get it into a few festivals and that some people



can connect with it. I am not really worried about making money to be honest, more about showcasing the talent of the people who put time aside to work on this film. It's been quite a learning process, and I look forward to the next one because there's so much I can look back on





and think how I can speed up next time. I will be marketing the film from here on out, and if we get a good response I'll be happy. If we get any distribution, I would be over the moon. The main thing is that I want people to watch it and feel like they can relate to the characters and the story. I think everyone can relate to the feeling of being lost in this day and age. I hope that this film opens doors for me to able to get a bit more funding for the next one."

Future projects

And what adventurous topics could he be trying in the future? "I'm just finishing up the treatment for a script called Going Home," adds the filmmaker. "It's a dark comedy about a family reunion with lots of humour. But I am still developing the idea. I think I will always have elements of relationships and humour in my work. I think it's important to show the more intimate moments between people. I'd like to try and write a different genre too. I really want to do a thriller, or a revenge film. Something dark with a more grim look at isolation. I am a huge fan of Takeshi Kitano, more specifically his film Sonatine (1993). It's just an artistic, violent yet comedic masterpiece. He's a genius in the way he mixes genres up. I love indie films and counter cinema, so if I could make a film with a bigger budget I would still try and do something with a deeper idea and humanness behind it."

Needless to say, Mathias still has to do other things to pay the bills and works at a college of further education as a technician, taking care of the kit and TV studio, as well as edit suites. It has, he says, given him an all-round knowledge of equipment and editing. It's also given him the freedom to make this film as well as work as a freelancer on music videos and other projects because of the holidays.

He therefore offers sage advice to fellow filmmakers out there who might be considering a beefy project of their own… "If you don't have a budget, use what you have, your locations and ask around," he states. "A lot of times people will help and all you need to do is ask. Try and network and, if you are starting out, just work on anything that comes up because you never know who you are going to meet who could help you in the future.



A scene from In Transit

If you have very little money, buy a DSLR and go shoot something, even if it's experimental because you'll get better."

Practice makes perfect

"Planning and organisation is essential," says Mathius. "It's the most boring part of the process, but the more work you do in pre-production, the more you can relax and focus on the film while you are actually making it. Don't get visibly stressed on set either, because it creates a bad atmosphere. If you do, then take a minute to breathe and then get back to the shoot. We're all doing this because we want to create something we care about.

Write your film and make it. You have to keep doing it and push on until you get a response. If your film isn't good, learn from it and keep going. I don't think I'll ever feel that my work is perfect; there are bits I love but also bits I absolutely hate. Surround yourself with positive people who are willing to help you, and who you can help in return. I've pushed really hard in the last year and I'm pleased with the results having won a couple of awards and, of course, shot my very first feature film." ■

"I'm really proud that this journey is almost complete. I hope we get it into a few festivals and some people can connect with it"

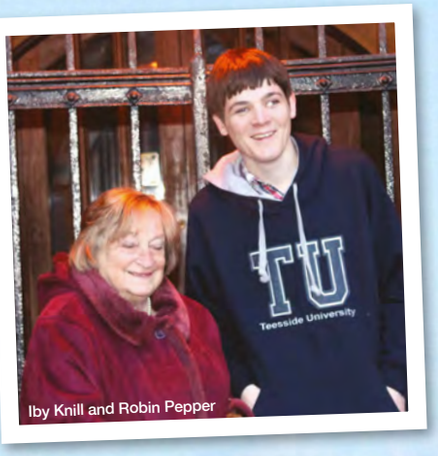


DIRECTOR INTERVIEW

Moving pictures

Robin Pepper is a filmmaker who chose to produce a powerful documentary about Holocaust survivor Iby Knill for his final year at university





Iby Knill and Robin Pepper

While any kind of genre presents the filmmaker with different challenges, getting a documentary to work as it should can be a pretty tough call. Opting to make one as part of your final year at uni seems even more challenging. Add to that the subject matter, which in this case deals with the real-life experiences of a Holocaust survivor and you have a filmmaking project that deserves closer inspection. Little wonder then that Iby Knill: An Auschwitz Promise has drawn the attention of the national media, not just here in the UK, but overseas too. It's the work of Robin Pepper, who is currently a researcher and keen filmmaker who reckons that the experience has made him ready for just about anything in the future…

IMAGES COPYRIGHT OF ROBIN PEPPER, TEESSIDE UNIVERSITY, IBY KNILL AND MARK OXLEY

"I've always been a creative person," he says. "I get inspired by the things around me really easily and I love the way images can tell a story. I used to take my camera everywhere and that's how I got into film. I really enjoy things with meaning, whether that's in a blockbuster movie or a Channel 4 documentary. I really love things that have a point to them. Otherwise what is the point? I have always tried to stay true to that in whatever I do."

Robin was lucky enough to have spent a lot of time working at various factual TV companies inbetween his university studies. From that, he was able to learn so much, even when it came to basic organisational skills such as using call sheets. Robin reckons it's vital to have your shoot researched and planned before you pick up a camera. It seems obvious, but he also learnt to pick up the phone and make things happen, rather than just sending an email. He was able to use his experiences at a real production company and apply it to his university productions. It also inspired him to take on bigger, more ambitious projects. It was that philosophy that produced the Iby Knill story…

"In my final year at Teesside University, we had to make a graduation film," he explains. "I knew I wanted to make a documentary and I wanted to 'push the boat out'. I began scouring the north east looking for stories that inspired me. I came across a book by 90-year-old Holocaust survivor Iby Knill. I read a subsequent online interview where she talked about her experiences, including working for the Hungarian resistance in World War 2 and more heartbreakingly, it detailed her time in Auschwitz. Things moved quickly from there, I read her book in no time and arranged to meet with Iby. I then enlisted the help of two other students on the same course at the university, Mark Oxley and Ian Orwin and we travelled down to Leeds to meet her."

"I never set out to make a story about the holocaust," adds Robin. "As a group, we have always been very ambitious. So when we discovered Iby's fascinating story and realised how much of a fantastic contributor she was, we knew we had to do it. It's certainly educated us more about the holocaust and we will never forget the experience we had working with Iby."

Compulsive viewing

The story is a compelling one and certainly not a lightweight topic to handle so early on in a filmmaking career. However, Robin and his crew rose to the challenge and have produced a fine body of work. "I realised early on that I had an amazing opportunity in front of me," he reflects. "I had the chance to make whatever I wanted. All the kit was available for me to use at university and I really wanted to use this opportunity to make a difference. I was fully aware that it would be hugely ambitious project, but I wanted to do it for Iby. While she was in Auschwitz, Iby made a promise to a twin girl. The girl was being used by the Nazis in experiments and the twin knew she would never leave Auschwitz alive. Iby was leaving to work in a slave labour camp and the girl made Iby promise that she would tell the world what she had seen. Iby was unable to talk about it for 60 years but that promise is still motivating her today."

Nevertheless, the topic is a



sensitive one and needed to be handled in the right manner… "I think it's important to build a relationship with contributors before interviewing them on camera," continues the filmmaker. "You get a much better result and you can get the best from them. I really felt that because Iby's story was so complex and busy, it was important that we worked with her to pick out the most salient strands of her story. I met with her a few times before shooting to do this and we were able to build a rough narrative to follow. I also thought it would be good for me as I knew I had to conduct a really sensitive interview. I needed to work out how far I could go question wise.

I didn't have a master plan to start with, but I knew I would have to shoot some of the film abroad in some of the places relating to Iby's story. I decided early on I would not use any archive footage in the film. For me, archive wasn't going to do Iby's story justice. I felt it was important to get our own footage, rather than use someone else's and I thought that visiting some of the places Iby did would help us to build a better film because we would, in a way, be experiencing the same things around her."

So with careful planning and lots of research, the project gradually fell into place… "After we met with Iby to talk about storylines I continued to research into the locations and the places Iby would be talking about in the film," adds Robin. "This meant researching Auschwitz. I watched several documentaries on the camps and read many survivor stories. It was only at this point did I realise what we had let ourselves in for! There was one time, after a heavy evening of research, that I came across some harrowing video from the camps and I almost decided not to continue. I knew that we had to do it for Iby."





Putting it together

Determination has clearly played a big part in the whole production, even more so considering that the team had very little in the way of money to play with. Spending was, well, frugal to say the least it seems… "We only had a small student budget and a short amount of time to make this film, so we had to plan every detail of the shoot abroad to the hour," recalls the filmmaker. "We travelled on a super small budget, which included a nightmare delayed bus trip from Krakow, Poland to Budapest in Hungary. We shot the main interview first with Iby in the middle of January 2013. Shooting this first gave us a really good idea of what material we needed abroad and we flew to Poland two weeks later. A few weeks after that we did a second interview with Iby to cover some extra storylines.

Throughout my three years at university I had worked closely with Mark and Ian. I didn't have to think twice about bringing them in and I'm so grateful they flew out to shoot with me. Ian beautifully shot the majority of the film with Mark co-producing on location. It was fantastic to have a strong team working on this project. The support we also received from the staff at Teesside Uni was fantastic and only made the film stronger."

At least the crew had some decent kit to get the job done, and the results are clear to see

"I decided early on I would not use any archive footage in the film. For me, archive wasn't going to do Iby's story justice" - Robin Pepper







when you watch the documentary footage back… "We shot the majority of the film on a Sony EX3, with additional city shots on a Canon 650D," says Robin. "The EX3 was ideal, as we wanted something that was high-end and flexible enough to be transported around eastern Europe. The picture quality is fantastic and great for its flexibility. I really wanted my city shots to be detailed and have a slightly different look about them, so we chose to shoot them on my trusty 650D. When interviewing Iby we used the 3-point lighting technique. I chose to use Dedolights due to the low heat emission. I really wanted to make things as comfortable as possible for Iby. I was really pleased with the kit we took and the results. I expected the cold weather to completely wipe out any life in the batteries so we went over prepared. The camera was in this massive heavy flight box, which we… (Mark) had to lug around everywhere. It was horrible! We flew with a budget airline so couldn't take any chances."

Unsurprisingly, filming on location also proved harrowing… "Filming in the Auschwitz camp was extremely intense and emotionally draining," adds Robin. "It was the end of January when we flew out to film, so it was bitterly cold. I think that people need to visit Auschwitz to see for themselves just how horrific and harrowing it is. It's important for people to learn from it, in the hope that we can prevent it from happening again. It was strange shooting a film in a death camp. After filming in Poland we moved production over to beautiful Budapest. Budapest was a wonderful city to film in. It was full of character and I really enjoyed the experience. We met some great people on the road who inspired me further."

Perfect pictures

With filming in the can, was there a lot of work to be done in post-production, mainly due to the eye for detail instilled in Robin by the sound of it… "The film spent four months in post-production," he says. "I'm a perfectionist and we had spent so much time during production making the film the best it could be, it was really important to get it right in the edit. I did a lot of work on the narrative to give Iby's story the justice it deserved. I



felt it was important to take week long breaks during the edit to allow me to get the images perfect. Particularly when it came to the Auschwitz GV's, the images became the second character in the film. The music was also key and we spent a while choosing the best score to the film."



Iby's mother and father

The film appears to have had the desired effect - particularly on the young filmmaker himself. Has it left a lasting impression? "Working with Iby was one of the greatest experiences of my life," states Robin. "She is such an amazing lady and it's certainly made a huge lasting impression on all of us that worked on it. It felt like we were also taking on Iby's promise to the twin to help share her story with the world. I'm glad we were able to get the film out there for people to watch long into the future. We need this kind of material around for when survivors are no longer here to tell us their story in person. The response I have had from the film has been fantastic. Iby has been taking the film around with her when she visits schools and it is shown. It's a great feeling knowing that she is happy with the film we have made about her. After the film was made, Iby's son got in touch from Norway. He was so grateful that we had done this and he wanted a DVD of the film to show to his daughter (Iby's grandchild) when she was old enough to understand. That was incredibly moving for everyone on the team."

The experience also helped Robin gain a better vision of himself and what he wants to do on future projects… "I learnt a lot about who I was from this project and what

I wanted to do after I finished university. I also had a chance to reflect on the film and the ways I would do it differently next time. On reflection, there are so many ways I would change the film now, but I guess that's just how you learn. When it came to edit, we did very nearly run out of overlay footage and I think, next time, I will most definitely be shooting a little more than I need. We actually didn't have any wasted shots, so I was pleased about that. Making the film was very challenging, but working on a subject like that has helped my filmmaking immeasurably. I really want to continue telling stories from a personal point of view. I'm really interested in looking at how filmmaking can lead to direct action on current issues, such as last year's documentary Blackfish. I thought the film was hugely compelling and a great example of how a documentary should be made."



The way forward

Robin can clearly manage a project from start to finish and, with the documentary under his belt, would love to keep on doing more of the same… "I hope to continue travelling and finding people with stories that need to be told," he enthuses. "I'm currently working on some ideas



for potential documentaries and researching possible funding routes. I would really like to see more industry support for new filmmakers and more grants to help with documentary development. At the moment, I want to continue to create content that people can watch, enjoy and, perhaps, even be inspired by. I think more people should attempt to make things about powerful topics, There's so many fantastic stories out there that we will never get to hear about. It's really easy to get hold of something to make a film with, so I hope more people will go out and do it. I hope that people will learn something from the film that we made. And I hope that it inspires them to find a story that needs telling."

His perseverance has certainly paid off, with a series of high-profile interviews having followed the release of the documentary, something that Robin sounds suitably chuffed about… "Yes, we received lots of local media coverage shortly after we finished on the film," he beams. "I learnt so much about dealing with the press and how to work it to our advantage. I even ended up writing a blog for The Guardian, which was unreal! A few months later, in September last year, I read an article about The Community Channel, which broadcasts on Sky, Virgin and Freeview. I decided to send the film over to them and they wanted to broadcast it. This lead to further national coverage in the radio and newspapers and Iby even appeared on BBC Radio 2 to promote the broadcast! It was fantastic that we could help Iby share her story with the world via our film." ■



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Photo credit Martin Walter

Get to grips with Premiere Pro CC

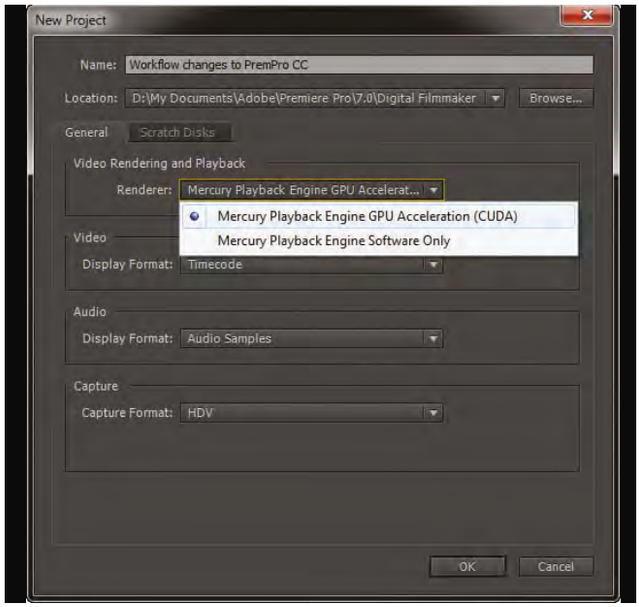
Paul Ekert, author of Mastering Adobe Premiere Pro, demonstrates how to tackle the workflow changes that feature in the latest edition of this software package



Love it or loath it, the Creative Cloud from Adobe appears to be here to stay. Using this system, nobody can have what's referred to as a 'perpetual licence'. Instead, the software is 'leased' to users who pay a monthly (or in some cases annual) fee for the privilege. The software still downloads to your computer and the only thing that's really in the cloud is an online software verification that happens once every now and again, which some may find intrusive, while others won't bat an eyelid.

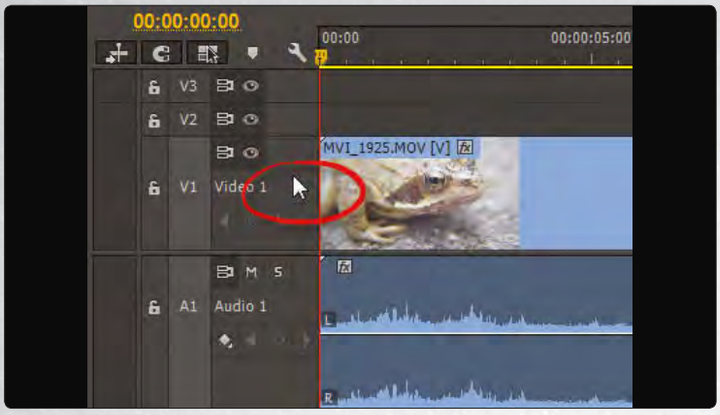
At the time of writing and, for the next few weeks, if you are a CS3 user (or even use just a single application such as Premiere Pro CS3), you can enter your serial number into the Creative Cloud sign up page and receive a hefty discount on the subscription fee; at least for the first year! With or without that discount you will then have access to pretty much every single application that Adobe makes. While some of them have less relevance to filmmakers than others, the fact that these applications are constantly being updated adds a great deal of weight to the argument of just how much value this scheme appears to offer.

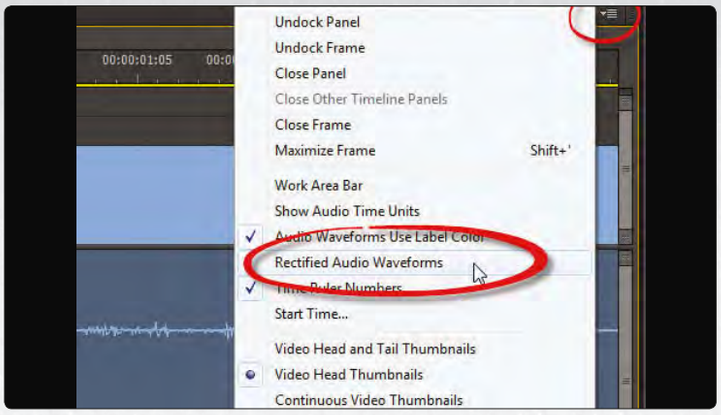
Of course, new versions of software are fraught with workflow changes, some for the benefit of mankind, and others for the benefit of those who provide online lessons in how to remain calm in stressful situations. Our tutorials will be dipping in to this software-fest, focusing on those of particular interest to filmmakers and that come inclusive in the cost of the Creative Cloud. Some features definitely need some extra explaining to get the most from them. This month's tutorial will look at the important workflow changes and additional features of Premiere Pro CC.



Mercury Playback changes...

Launch Premiere Pro CC, select New Project and you will be presented with the New Project window. Here you can select the type of rendering your computer will use (Software Only or GPU Acceleration). Previously, Premiere Pro would check to see if your card was on the supported list and if it wasn't you had to manually edit a text file in order to use Mercury Playback. Now, Premiere Pro CC just tells you that your card is not officially supported, but lets you use it anyway.



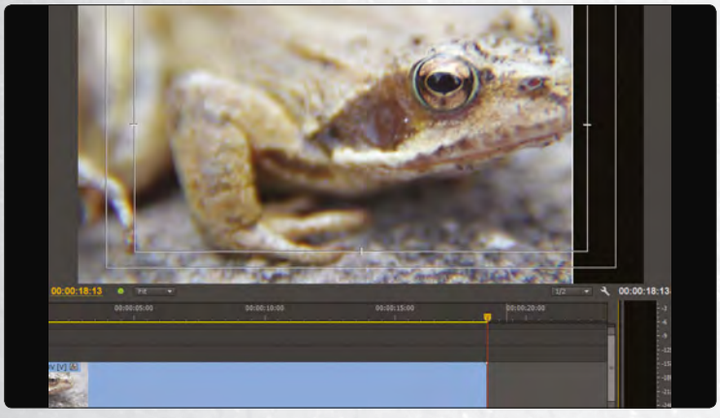


Timeline track changes...

Import a clip with audio and Create a New Sequence from your clip to place it on the Timeline. To expand or contract the height of either a video or audio track, simply place your mouse cursor over the track you want to change and use the mouse wheel to alter the height. Note that Keyframe controls, Heads and Tails, Waveforms and so on will not be visible until you expand the tracks beyond their default size.

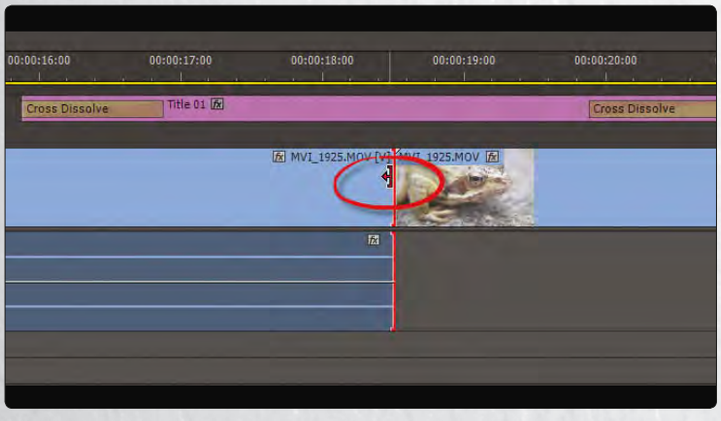
Audio Waveform changes...

With the Audio track expanded to show the waveform of your clip, you will probably have noticed a change in the way this is displayed. The default now displays the audio as Rectified Audio Waveforms. If you preferred the old way of displaying the peaks and troughs of your audio tracks, just click on the Timeline options icon in the top right of the Timeline and uncheck the Rectified Audio Waveforms option.



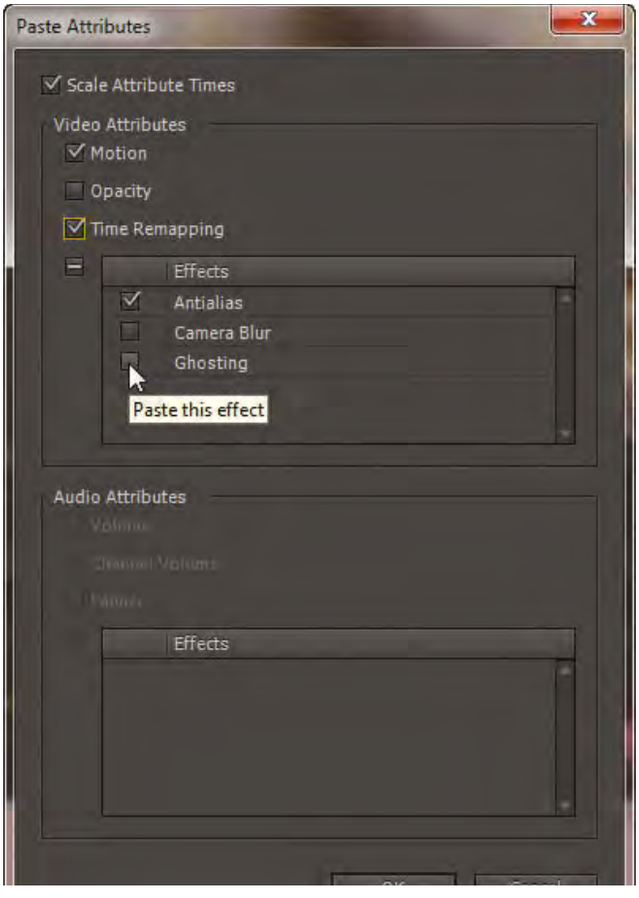
Last frame indicator...

Play the timeline until the last frame of the last clip and you'll see a white vertical line appear, along with a fifth of the frame showing as black (see above). Fear not, this is a new feature called the Last Frame Indicator, which unsurprisingly indicates when you have reached the last frame on your timeline. This cannot be turned off, but it doesn't appear in your exported renders, so it really isn't a problem. In time you will learn to tolerate it.



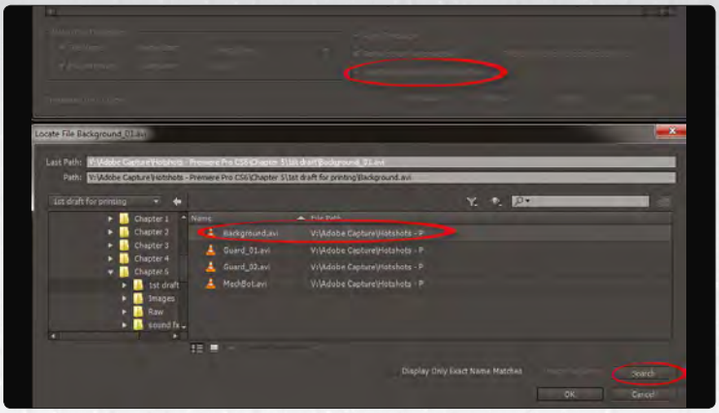
Cross dissolve shortcut changes...

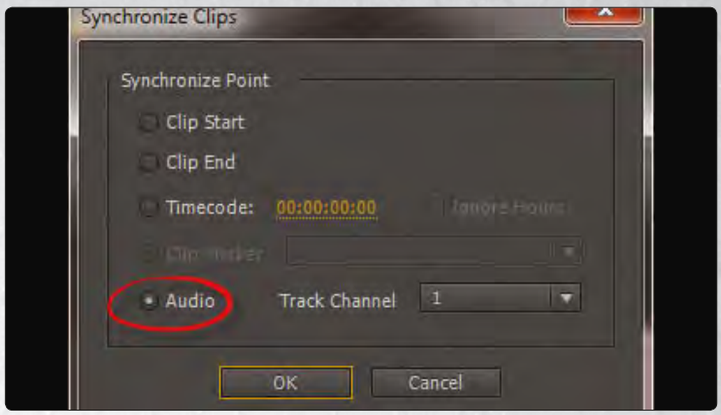
The Cross Dissolve is still applied using the shortcut Ctrl or Cmd +D, but if you have, say, a Title selected, it's added to the head and tail of that clip. If you have no clip selected it's added to the edit point nearest the Timeline Indicator, which is unpredictable! To accurately place your Cross Dissolve where you intended it to go, click on the leading edge of the clip and then hit the shortcut keys.



Paste attribute changes...

A useful function on the Premiere Pro timeline has been the ability to copy and paste the attributes from one clip to another, a feature that's been in the program now for some time. What's new in Premiere Pro CC is the ability to choose which of those attributes you want to paste onto the target clip. Motion, Opacity and Time Remapping are listed by default, but any other effects you've added to the clip will also be listed and all of them can be deselected before you paste those attributes.





7 Relinking lost or moved clips...

When you load a project, Premiere Pro will expect to find all the assets. If their location has changed, or you are working on a project sent to you on a USB drive, they may not be immediately obvious to Premiere Pro. A new feature to help out in this situation is seen when launching Premiere Pro CC's own Media Browser (by default this is toggled on) in order to help you locate those missing files.

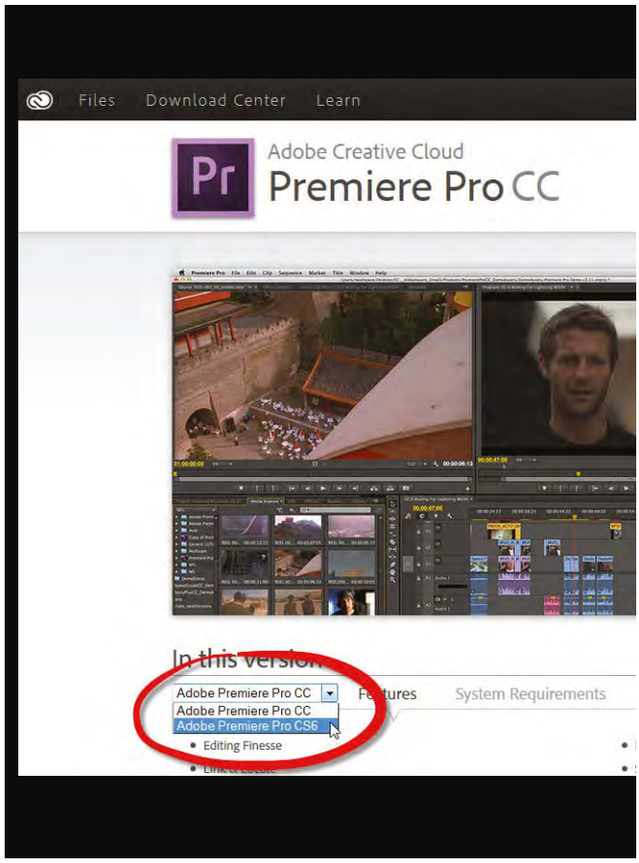
8 Syncing sound files without plug-ins...

A cool new feature that has gained virtually zero exposure is the ability to automatically sync video and audio files on the timeline without the need for expensive plug-ins. To use it just place your video and separately recorded audio on the Timeline (or multiple videos shot at the same time), drag a lasso around both clips, right click and select Synchronize. When the box appears, select Audio and OK.



9 Audio clip mixer keyframes...

Premiere Pro CC has been given a new resource; the Audio Clip Mixer, which has the ability to write keyframes to the selected clip, allowing the user to dynamically adjust audio on the fly. To use this feature, simply select the clip you want to adjust, toggle ON the Write Keyframes icon and play the clip. As the clip progresses you are able to adjust the slider to move the volume up and down as required. When you stop playback, your adjustments will be written to the clip's audio section as keyframes.



10 Finding Encore...

Adobe, with perhaps a nod to the fact that we now prefer our media to be delivered to us via downloads, has decided to stop development of Encore CS6. However, if you still need to burn DVDs for your customers or those film festivals that will take nothing else; you can still get hold of Encore CS6 by accessing the Premiere Pro Download page (https://creative.adobe.com/products) and selecting Premiere Pro CS6 from the menu as shown above. Click the download button and Encore will be installed to your computer. That said, Dynamic Link is no longer available.

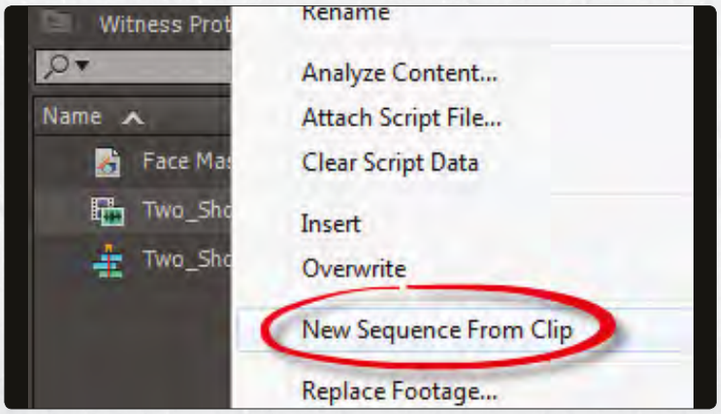


Protecting the innocent Part 2: Vocal effects with Premiere Pro CC

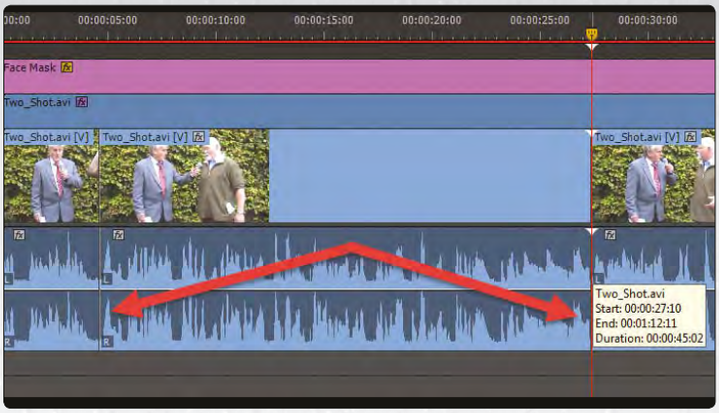
Learn how to alter the voice of a witness using Premiere Pro CC, by Paul Ekert, author of Mastering Adobe Premiere Pro

This is the second part of a tutorial aimed at documentary makers who want to disguise the identity of anyone they film. Last month's overview showed how to use Premiere Pro's titler application, combined with the Track Matte filter, to blur the face of a witness. In this issue you will add the finishing touches to the project by altering the voice of the witness using effects available to all Premiere Pro users; the PitchShifter and Bass audio filters. You'll also learn how to save this cumulative effect as a custom Preset so you can add it quickly and easily to your future projects.

This tutorial is based on a chapter from Mastering Adobe Premiere Pro, available from Packt Publishing. Each chapter is project-based and footage for most of them is supplied, including this one. If you didn't follow last month's tutorial, you will need to visit the Packt Publishing website (tinyurl.com/a6syu3d), click on the Support tab and download the Zip file for chapter 3 (that contains the material used in this article). Once you've finished downloading it, unpack the contents to the hard drive you've dedicated for storing your video material. When this is complete, you're ready to proceed with the rest of the tutorial.

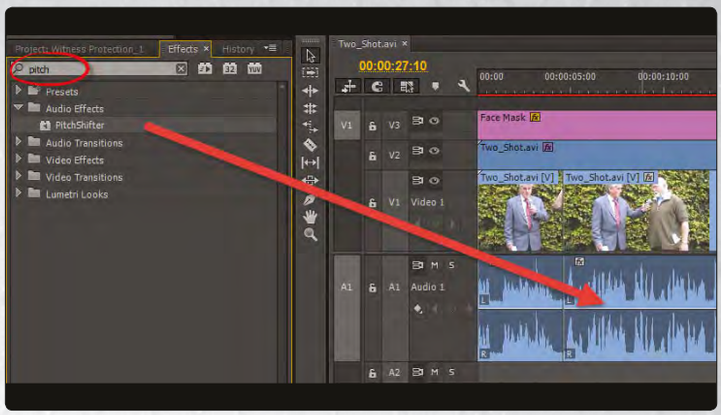


Setting up the Timeline... Launch Premiere Pro and open the project you created while following last month's tutorial. If you haven't completed that project, then import the video file Two_Shot.avi (downloaded from the website) and right-click the file to select New Sequence From Clip. This will create a sequence with exactly the settings required for the Two_Shot.avi clip. Press \ (backslash) to zoom the timeline to the duration of this clip.



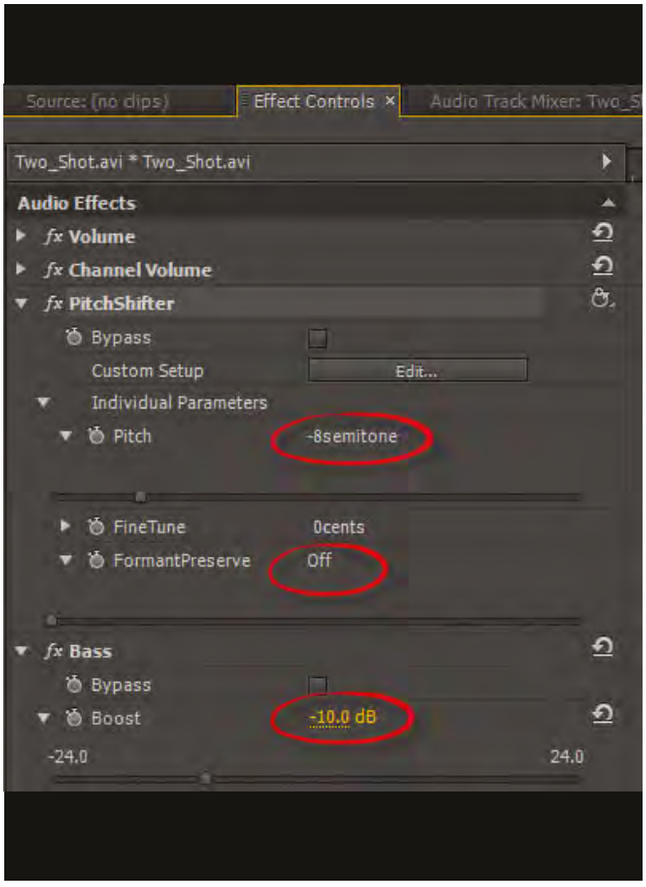
Define the areas to be changed...

Use any of the Premiere Shortcuts (or the mouse) to locate the point where the witness begins to talk (on the Two_shot.avi clip this is around 04:15) and press C to select the razor tool. Cut the clip at that point using the mouse. Move further along the timeline to where the witness stops talking (this is around 27:10) and make a second cut there. Press V to switch back to the Selection tool.



Adding two audio effects...

Press Shift+7 to switch to the Effects Browser and in the search field type the word Pitch. Locate the PitchShifter audio filter and drag it onto the audio tracks of the section you defined in step two. Switch back to the Effects Browser again and this time, type Bass into the search field. Locate the Bass audio filter and add it to the same area as the PitchShifter using drag and drop.



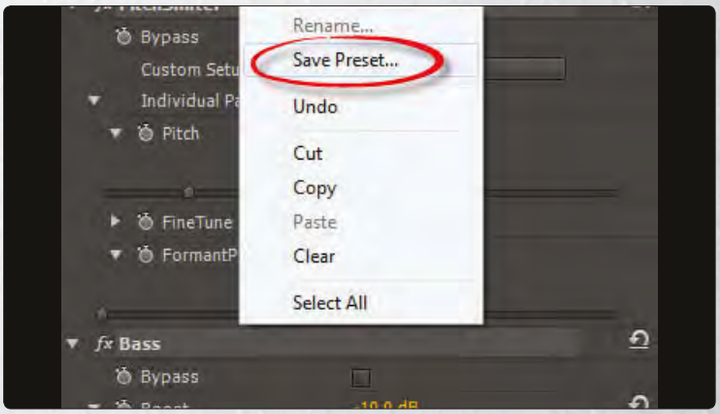
Disguising the voice...

You are now at last ready to start disguising the voice of the witness. In this case the optimal settings seem to be altering Pitch to -8 semitone, leaving FineTune at the default zero value and setting FormantPreserve to Off. This does alter the voice, but leaves a hard edge to the higher sounding vowels. Correct this by changing Boost (in the Bass effect) to -10.0b. If you want to have a 'Secret Squirrel' voice change, simply use plus values in the Pitch parameter instead.



Working with audio effects...

By default, both filters are inert at a setting of Zero, which is pretty standard for Premiere Pro. You need to change this by pressing Shift+5 to open the Effect Controls panel, which is where you can customise these audio filters. Start by dialling open the PitchShifter parameters by clicking on the small triangle next to Individual Parameters, Pitch and FormantPreserve. For Bass you only need the Boost option.



Creating a Preset...

Once you're happy with the effect, hold down the Cmd or Ctrl key and click the title of the PitchShifter and the Bass effect to select both. Right-click and select Save Preset. In the window, enter Voice Changer into the name field and press enter. Repeat step two to locate and slice more areas where the witness speaks, but enter Voice Changer into the search field and drag your customised preset onto these areas.


ON LOCATION

ARIZONA

From an idea in rainy London to the location scout of a lifetime, writer/director Emma Lindley shares the development of her brand new and as yet untitled US indie feature...





February 2014

I'm standing at the US/Mexican border, outside a soup kitchen for recently deported Mexican and Central American immigrants. Our guide points at a distant figure up on the hill above. The drug cartel scout is watching us through binoculars.

How did I get here?

I was in Arizona to research my new feature film. It's a drama about a New York lawyer who finds a ten-year-old Mexican girl in the Arizona desert and struggles to reunite her with her mother, taking her head-to-head with a corrupt local politician.

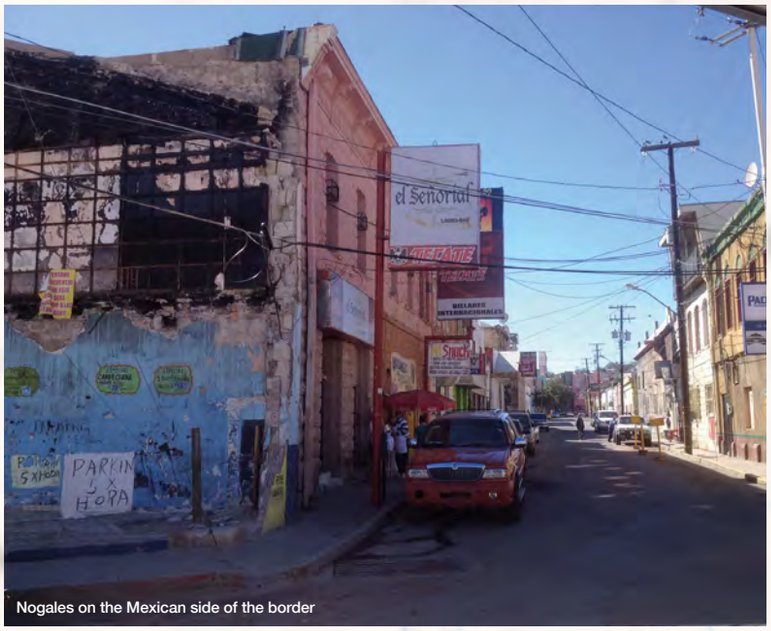
Why this story?

I had been carrying around an article from the New York Times for a year or so. It described how heavily pregnant Mexican women were walking across the desert to have their babies in the United States, to give them US citizenship. Arizona had passed a tough new law increasing police powers to arrest undocumented migrants, and questioning the right of these so called 'anchor babies' to becoming fully-fledged Americans. It seemed like a good story, but a job directing a TV series in the States kept me away from writing it. When I got home to London I sketched out a treatment and a few rough scenes.

I had another, more personal, reason for writing this story. My mother had died recently and I didn't know how to process my grief and come to terms with what had happened and so I found a story about mothers and daughters. So my main character, the lawyer, Amy, becomes a woman grieving for her own mother, and determined to reunite this girl with her mother as a way to try and solve her own feelings.

From treatment to first draft

I showed the treatment to a friendly producer in London who said two things that stayed with me. He said, 'You need to write the script so someone will fall in love with it and want to produce it.' And, 'You need an American producer.' I knew he was right on



Nogales on the Mexican side of the border

both counts. I had been writing the treatment piecemeal in my spare time, but knew I had to make a commitment to writing the first draft. So in January 2013, I took two months off my directing and teaching work and started the script - and a writer's blog, stating my intention to nail the first draft in that time.

I found a great script editor in my friend Kira-Anne Pelican (www.filmscribe.co.uk). A UCLA trained writer and script analyst, she has a great eye for structure and understanding of genre. Kira-Anne was supportive of the story and brilliantly precise in her notes. So I wrote - and rewrote. And a couple of months passed… (you know the drill).

Finding a US producer

In the meantime, I was preparing to go to Cannes for the first time with fellow mentees on the Women in Film and Television Mentoring Scheme (http://www.wftv.org.uk/mentoring-scheme). At Cannes, I hung out in the American Pavilion (www.ampav.com) and went to several of their (very good) producer and director panel events. It was at one of those events that I noticed a cool looking woman next to me in the audience. 'I like your dress,' I said. 'I like yours', she said politely. We chatted a bit, swapped cards and that was it. Back at home I looked her up and discovered she was Christine Walker, of New Globe Films, and producer of some of my favourite films including Factotum with Matt Dillon, American Splendor with Paul Giamatti and Howl with James Franco. So I sent her a one page synopsis for my feature.

A month or so passed. Christine read the one pager, liked it and





asked to see the script. I rewrote the script again (between other jobs) before I sent it to her. And kept writing while I waited to hear. By now, a few friends (writers and the friendly producer) had seen the most recent draft, so I was fielding comments from a number of sources on the next rewrite. In November I heard back from Christine, she really liked the story and was interested in coming on board to help me develop it further.

A trip to the States

I had been planning a location recce and research trip for a while so the timing was great. I could combine a script meeting with Christine in LA with my longed for Arizona road trip and make sure my story was accurate and reflected real events happening on the border. Which is how I found myself a couple of weeks ago, staring up at the Mexican hills, wondering whether that distant kid in a hoodie from the cartel could see the whites of my eyes.

Here's what we did on our Arizona recce...

Location scout

I wanted to see the famed Arizona landscape with its deserts, mountains and big skies - of course for visual inspiration, but also so I could visualise the logistics of my final act set in the desert borderlands - what would the final desert rescue and shoot-out scenes look like? My friend Doris and I visited almost all the locations in the script and were shown even more by friends we made along the way.

Photo shoot

The main image of the film for me was this young Mexican girl walking out of the desert. A friend of a friend, Mary, was a teacher in an Arizona primary school so I asked if she knew any Hispanic pupils interested in acting. I had bought a Sony compact camera (the Cyber-Shot DSC-HX300) with a big Zeiss zoom lens, that turned out to be ideal for both close-up candid portraits and landscape photography. Mary and I drove our girl (and her Mum) to a local National Park, which had the perfect blend of desert and mountain terrain I was looking for. And, just like that, she became Elena…

Finding the real world of my story

I needed to see if events in my script were going to be reflected in the reality on the border.



Immigration is the hottest political debate in the US - everyone has an opinion on what should be done, but no one can agree. I met and interviewed people on all sides of the huge metal fence that divides Mexico and the States. I had written about undocumented migrants, the ranchers whose land they crossed, the Border Patrol agents and immigration lawyers. Now I was meeting the real thing. As always, the reality was more fascinating than anything I could have imagined. What I found was that there were no simple bad guys and good guys - everyone is struggling in a system that is overwhelmed and, in many ways, broken.

Hundreds of thousands of migrants cross illegally into the United States from Mexico every year, but what I hadn't realised was how tightly controlled all the people smuggling is by the cartels. Migrants pay an average of $4,000 each to come across but are often abandoned by their 'coyote' guides during the long journey and left to die in the desert or the mountains. Even if they are taken across, they are most often immediately picked up, processed




Canyon Lake and the Superstition mountains

and then dumped straight back over the border by the Border Patrol. If they are reoffenders (or even if it's their first time) they could be held in detention for months before being deported to Mexico.

Often deported in the middle of night with no money or possessions, migrants are often left many miles from their original town or village in Mexico or central America. We visited the soup kitchen for deported migrants run by the charity Kino Border Initiative (www.kinoborderinitiative.org) on the Mexican side of border town (and key crossing point) Nogales. There was a woman there who had been deported for not having the right papers after fourteen years



living and working in the States with her three children. She now had no way back to her family who were stuck in Arizona, while she was trapped on the Mexican side of the border.

Drama v documentary

As I talked to people I realised many of them thought I was making a documentary. There are many similarities - you are meeting real people, hearing their stories albeit for research only - and my experience of producing TV documentaries definitely helped me contact people and set up encounters. The difference this time was that I wasn't recording any interviews. Many conversations I had were off the record, with people who wanted to remain nameless. Even taking my notebook out made some people jumpy, and with good reason. So I listened very hard and tried to understand what was going on, and made notes in the middle of the night about what I'd seen and heard that day.

You might think Jim Chilton, who has a ranch on the border, would not be sympathetic to the thousands of migrants crossing his land each year. But I found him compelling as he explained his own struggles - not just with the damage caused to his cattle and water supply - but the real physical danger he and his family faced from the people and drug smuggling cartels operating on his land. He supports a work programme for migrants, but only after the government has secured his part of the border effectively.

I felt very involved with the all people I met in Arizona and fascinated by their personal experiences. I trust that when I sit down to rewrite the script, I will sift through all the stories I've heard and the things that matter will rise to the top. I'm hugely grateful to everyone who helped us on our trip and I feel like the film has taken a huge leap forward as a result. Watch this space to find out what happens next as (after another rewrite!) we go in search of name talent for our lead roles….

If you'd like to find out more about my work to date or about setting up a shoot in the States, you can contact me at info@emmalindley.net. To follow our progress with the film, you can check out my blog located over at www.emmalindley.net/blog or follow me @emlin32 on Twitter. Thanks for reading and good luck with all your projects! ■


Saying grace at the soup kitchen


The future film location of Bisbee

TEN TIPS FOR A GREAT US RECCE

1. Know why you're going

Sounds obvious right? But there are many different reasons for doing a scout at this relatively early stage of development. Don't try and do too many things at once. Is it a teaser reel shoot or a script research trip? Are you raising finance or meeting potential filmmaking collaborators? You can combine some of these goals into one trip, but be aware you'll end up going back later anyway so keep it simple - what needs to happen now to move your film forward?

2. Set it all up before you go

I only had ten days on the ground in Arizona, so I had to make every day count. I had been in touch with organisations and people for months before whose work touched on the themes in my film. You need time to build relationships and to make sure you can meet up/gain access on the days you'll be there. You'll also need a long lead in time if dealing with government bodies. For example, the Department of Homeland Security requires at least 4-6 weeks to process filming or research requests from foreign filmmakers and you will have to submit a lot of information, including a script and proof of a distribution deal as they get so many requests. Other bodies are easier, but still need prior notice.



... And tell them who you are

Have a one page synopsis, or at least a pitch paragraph, explaining who you are and what the film is about. Establish your credentials as a filmmaker and show you are serious about the issues you're writing about and have done your research. Be specific about what you are asking people for and when you will be over. If they can't help, ask them to suggest someone who can. I have always found Americans to be especially willing to help with a politely worded request.

3. Contact the local film office and filmmakers

The Tucson Film Office put together a web page of locations when I approached them and also holds lists of local crew and companies online. Most cities have film offices like in England, which can be very helpful in advising on filming permits too. I met with a local production company who were very helpful with on the ground for contacts and information. Social networking can unearth local filmmakers who can share advice and skills, which are all invaluable when considering how and where/when to film.



4. Plan it like a shoot

Once I had my dates and contacts set, I drew up a schedule, much like a filming one, detailing where we would be on each day, whom we would meet and their location and contact details. This was my bible when we were over there, and allowed us to move quickly from place to place and keep in touch with our contributors while on the move. Unless you are planning a longer stay in a country, time is of the essence to get the most out of your trip. Although do….

5. Leave room for adventures!

I deliberately left a couple of days free near the end of the schedule to allow for meeting new people or hearing about a great location I didn't know about. Many people we met put us in contact with other people who could help us, so having some flexibility in the schedule meant we could go and meet them. You also need some breathing space, to just sit and absorb the landscape, the people, and the world of your film.

6. Be considerate

As is the case when making a documentary or indeed a low-budget drama, your contributors are doing you a huge favour, so always be quick to accommodate their needs, to thank them and let them know if your plans change. Follow up with a thank you email and keep them updated with the progress of the project and any press they feature in. Americans are generally very polite, so don't be casual or off-hand about your work or theirs. Value their time.

7. Watch your budget

I brought a friend to drive our budget hire car and we booked apartments through airbnb.com, which saved money and led to meeting some great local people too. There are also lots of cheap motels. Petrol is, of course, really cheap in the States, so a road trip is a good value way to scout locations. The dollar to pound exchange rate also makes the States a relatively cheap place to visit for British filmmakers and if you're just taking location photographs or shooting test footage on your own camera, your recce costs can be easily managed. BUT...

8. Be prepared to spend some money

Nobody wants to hear this, but the reality as indie filmmakers is that we frequently subsidise our own films and especially the development phase. Even by keeping costs low, your trip is going to cost you, but it's a great investment in your project and in yourself as a filmmaker. You can also put it against tax further down the line.

9. Tell people what you're doing

Do as much press as you can around your trip - blogging, podcasts, posting photos on Twitter and Facebook before, during and after your trip. This is a great way to engage people with the story of your film. And, of course, you can always film your crowdfunding video while you're on the road…

10. Have fun!

A very dear friend reminded me to have fun as I set off on my trip. With all the stress of planning it, I was forgetting the most important thing - I love my job. I love travelling. And I love working in America. What's not to love about a road trip that also moves your project forward and feeds your soul? It's an experience you'll never forget. So get started…



The Student Perspective

Jake Graves is currently studying for a Bachelor of Arts film degree at Falmouth University in Cornwall and will complete his studies in a couple of years time



Growing up, I always had a passion for the movies and going to the cinema. There's something about sitting down and being completely immersed in a film. I remember going to the cinema for the first time when I and my family saw Star Wars: The Phantom Menace. I became truly amazed at how a filmmaker could create exactly what they imagined. As I got older and watched more films I realised that this would be a brilliant and creative career to aspire towards.



First Steps

In school, when I was taking my GCSE's, I had the opportunity to sign up to for a diploma where you could experiment with various arts and media, including video. I enjoyed the course more than my GCSE's as I could choose how to submit work, opting to make short films and video projects. In my own time, I also began making short films or stop-motion animations with friends. The course taught me the basics of operating cameras and using editing software, as well as composition and framing. We even collaborated frequently with local galleries and filmmakers. I took a similar course at college, which had a focus on the theory of design, filmmaking and the media, which set me up for university.

This is where my interest of the behind the scenes of a film really grew. Before then, I had focused on the production and

the enjoyment of physically making a film project. I had a habit of improvising as I went through projects, but my courses opened up the world of planning, how to write a decent script, along with producing a concise storyboard to ensure that everything runs smoothly. This helped me incredibly when I created music videos, stop-motion animations and short dramas. In my first year of college, BBC Video Nation came down to my hometown to create a documentary following the TV show Turn Back Time. The film was documenting the evolution of a town's high street over the centuries. I was able to be a cameraman and runner. This was a great experience seeing how a professional production is made. The first several days were spent researching the local history and sourcing photos from collections, before we conducted interviews with shopkeepers and older members of the town. Several months after it was completed, it was screened at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, which I attended, along with some of the production crew.

Fresh fields

In September 2013 I started on my film degree at Falmouth University, wanting to stay in Cornwall for its unique setting. The course is ideal for me, as it's essentially a combination of theory and practice, which follows on nicely from my previous courses, which proved to me that the theory behind a good film is essential. In this first year, the course has been divided in thirds between film history, learning professional practice skills and analysing movies to see what made them great. Being fond of history, I have particularly enjoyed our lectures on the social, historical or political context



behind a film before actually viewing it; as our lecturers believe knowing this is the best way to appreciate a movie.

The film school aims to replicate professional industry, so almost all work is group-based and we do not necessarily get to choose the projects, having to work with complete strangers to start with. While this did seem daunting to begin with, it was a brilliant way to get to know students on the course whom I hadn't met. This can also be said for when we're encouraged to source actors, musicians, designers and illustrators, which is one



of the best things of being at a creative arts campus. There is an abundance of creative types to collaborate with outside our immediate course.

Work so far

I produced the first film amongst our new group, titled The Goodyears. Inspired by a surreal Czech movie called Little Otik, we created a family drama surrounding a family and their fake baby. Everyone in our group would fulfill a department role, covering everything from cinematography to sound design. We each had inductions on using Panasonic P2 cameras, Glidecams, tracking equipment and lighting, but we divided up the roles to suit the experience and interests of each person. For example, the student in the group who has a passion for cinematography offered to focus training on the Glidecam, which can be a real complex bit of kit to operate. The script of the film was written by a group member who's had previous experience writing with a Norwegian production house, Omni Produksjon. I took on producing the project, based on my experience organising music videos and shorts at college. We filmed predominantly at a nearby beachside cove to make the most of the Cornish landscape.

The film took three days to shoot, with each day reaching 8-10 hours long, but the experience was brilliant and it was a great chance to put our theory from sessions and lectures into play. The actors were brilliant, and they were equally eager to gain some practical experience. Filming itself was a challenge, as we had to work with the constantly changing light



"The experience was brilliant and it was a great chance to put our theory from sessions and lectures into play" - Jake Graves on The Goodyears





throughout the day; if we lost the light we would have to reshoot those particular shots another day. While I was producing, I was originally going to leave the dedicated cameramen, audio recorder folks and lighting people to work their roles, but as with a lot of student productions, the jobs merge as the project continues. At some stage I had assisted operating the camera, set up the lighting and directed a few scenes myself. The organised chaos is one of the things I enjoy the most when making films, as it teaches us that things do not necessarily work to plan and we need to be able to work around problems. For example, we realised that our external audio recorder had developed an annoying fault during shooting midway on the first day, so we had to improvise by re-recording several shots and adapting our shooting schedules and storyboards.

Learning the ropes

One thing I have truly realised at film school is that it's one of the best ways to learn the essentials if you're aiming to go into the industry. I know ex-students and aspiring small-time filmmakers who teach themselves but now, having seen both worlds, for me I feel that film school is the fastest and most efficient way to learn the ropes. You're on a structured course that should give you everything you need to know, and the opportunities are brilliant. We have had a series of guest speakers and masterclasses from professional TV actors, BBC editors and feature directors who each give their best advice for our careers. They have been so useful! In February we are also going on a trip to the Berlinale Film Festival, which will be a great experience. We shall be able to attend feature premiers, including the one for Wes Anderson's Grand Budapest Hotel.

Another great aspect of film school is the friends and networks, I have met so many likeminded people who are eager to collaborate and work on something new. There are around 100 students on my course and so it's never hard to find a cinematographer, a sound recorder or even collaborators who are other courses, particularly when it comes to looking for actors and musicians. ■



To find out more about my university work or previous projects, see my YouTube Channel, http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAqBLKYBzkp3jpzgxlJd2wQ



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HARDWARE ADVICE

The DFM team offers up essential advice on getting started and takes a look at some of the best kit currently available for filmmaking



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SHOOTING VIDEO WITH A DSLR
CHOOSING THE RIGHT KIT

As a filmmaking beginner, it can be tricky to know what kit you need to shoot professional footage. So, before we look at the hardware, we'll give you an overview of what you'll need and hear how a professional filmmaker gets his job done





High-quality video production tools have become hugely accessible over recent years. With the development of new technology, even the low-end kit can rival some of the professional equipment of years gone by. Although achieving a professional level of video production depends on a sizeable amount of skill and experience, having the resources to hand that allow you to test these skills requires an initial investment in crucial recording equipment.

Capturing HD video with a DSLR is relatively cheap compared to the high-quality video cameras of several years ago, and in the right hands, they can even rival cinema-quality cameras. However, with the growing market and countless resources both on and offline, it can be difficult to decipher where your money can best be spent.

As with most areas of modern technology, cameras are forever changing. With new specification sheets and better features being developed all the time, they can become old news very rapidly. It is, therefore, very common for your DSLR to be the first item on your kit list to be replaced, whereas lenses and other accessories can last almost forever.

Lenses

Acquiring quality lenses is just as important as your camera choice, and many would argue even more so. High-end lenses will likely outlive most of the equipment and accessories in your arsenal, including your DSLR. Lenses are also relatively timeless, meaning that no matter how far technology progresses, they will always be able to produce top-quality video.

Most serious videographers will also argue that the best optics for shooting video are prime lenses. Prime lenses are those that do not zoom, but simply have one fixed focal length. Prime lenses also generally produce a cleaner, higher quality picture, as well as having the advantage of a fixed wide aperture. The 50mm prime lens, for example, is one of the most popular lens options available. It has a focal length that is thought of as a 'normal' lens, because it provides an image comparable to that of the human eye. All of the manufacturers offer a 50mm prime lens, which, although it equates to more than the stated 50mm length on crop sensor cameras, provides a great and highly practical place to start your new filmmaking journey.

However, depending on the subjects you're trying to shoot, a zoom lens may well be your perfect companion. There is a huge selection out there to choose from, with some being more suited to shooting video than others, and all coming in at varying qualities and price points. Typically, zoom lenses don't have the benefits of a fast aperture, and most of the beginner level lenses have a variable aperture throughout the zoom range. That said, a zoom lens with a large selection of focal lengths will allow you to play with the field of view and give you all the flexibility over composition that a prime optic simply can't.

Audio

The sound of your video is arguably as important as the footage you're capturing. Unfortunately, the built-in microphone within DSLRs should only really be reserved for emergencies. Luckily, there is an extensive range of alternatives for capturing high-quality audio.

For the videographer recording on the move, a simple external microphone plugged into your DSLR is a great option. Even the most basic of external microphones will be better equipped to remove unwanted background noise and capture crisp and clear sound more effectively from your subject.

For those who have more control over where their audio is coming from, potentially where the events being filmed have been pre-determined or scripted, using an external audio recording device is a popular method to call upon. The recorder can be placed anywhere away from your camera, and the separate audio file can then be synced with the video footage in post-processing.

Stability

Second to audio and video quality for those serious about capturing the best possible video is stability. A smooth and seamless video can be the difference between a professional looking movie and an amateur clip.

There's a huge selection of stability options out there designed to meet the needs of every videographer, whether you're going for a dynamic shot, remaining static, or chasing your subject across a wide open scene.

You'll also find endless accessories that can be attached to your kit list too, from extra lenses to lighting kits and advanced camera rigs. Although most of these aren't necessary items to get you started on your videography journey, they'll soon become everyday items that play a part in adding professional production value to your movies. ■

Interview with a Pro

Earlier in this issue we heard about the making of Wandering Rose. Now, filmmaker Corrie Greenop reveals what kit they used and, in particular, the appeal of the Panasonic Lumix GH2





Being a freelancer means that Corrie Greenop has used multiple makes and models of cameras in his time as a filmmaker, prior to production of his Wandering Rose feature. He eventually settled on the charms of the Panasonic Lumix GH2, for reasons he'll detail along the way in this feature. Prior to that however, let's hear about the kit he's had to get to grips with during his regular day job...

"You get what you're given on a lot of shoots," says Corrie. "So I've shot on a variety of cameras. C300's, Sony PMW 200/700's, the Canon 5D MKIII. I've even had GoPro's strapped to my chest and been thrown into the sea for some POV shots. A big part of my ethos is that kit does make a difference, but only if you know how to use it. Don't get too hung up on wanting to shoot on RED's and Alexa's. Don't let it put you off shooting. Shoot with what you can get your hands on. Be as creative as you can be with the resources you have. People can look past the quality of the product if the source material is great."

So what made him eventually choose the Lumix GH2 for this project? "We shot on the Panasonic Lumix GH2 because we could get our hands on one," says the filmmaker matter-of-factly. "After shooting on it a few weeks before the film, the look of the Lumix was stunning. We looked at the 5D MKIII and even a Blackmagic, but for usability, quality of output and the overall workflow it was an obvious choice. Also, for the locations we were shooting in we needed a camera that we could haul up mountains easily, something lightweight but, most importantly for me, the images it gave us far surpassed the 5D MKIII."

The Lumix GH2 makes a sound kit choice if you're just starting out too, thanks to a competitive price tag, ease of use and lightweight credentials... "For budding filmmakers the Lumix GH2 is a great choice," reckons Corrie. "It's half the price of a 5D and, once hacked, gives you nearly twice the Mbps. It's a great piece of kit. With it being Micro Four Thirds you can get some decent lenses for it and adaptors aren't too expensive either. The battery life is unbelievably good as well. We could take it out on location all day and only go through two batteries after a 12-hour shooting stint."


On location in Scotland

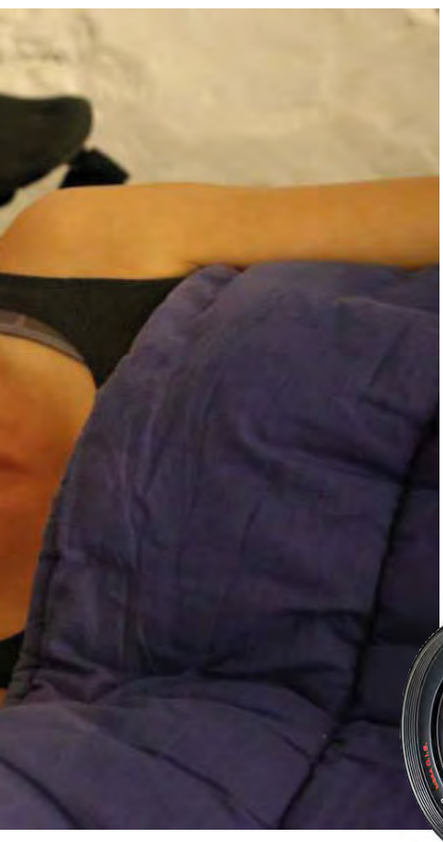




Flexible and adaptable

It was that versatility without the weight constraints that made the Lumix GH2 perfect for the kind of outdoors shoot that Corrie had carefully planned... "The Lumix GH2 was ideal for this type of shoot," enthuses the filmmaker. "Being able to put all our equipment into a rucksack allowed us to take the camera almost anywhere. Also, the amount of lenses we could get for the camera and along with the hack made it the perfect choice for the shoot. It didn't take too long to set up either. If we were out on location and the sunlight hit a certain spot, we could capture it immediately, rather than spend ages setting up the camera and miss the shot. It allows you to shoot at the speed of creativity you need."





However, with what is essentially a budget camera being used for such a project, any weaknesses must show themselves pretty early on too. Not so, according to the filmmaker it seems... "I know I'm going to sounds like a salesman for Panasonic here, but we really didn't have any problems with the Lumix at all," laughs Corrie. "Whether we were shooting in low light, up mountains, or in kayaks on lochs, we didn't have any issues at all with it. So many people get hung up on Canon that it's become almost snobbery. I even remember the faces of my actors when they turned up to set on the first day and saw us setting up the Lumix. We may as well have been shooting on a Nokia 3310 (nice Carl Zeiss lens!). I had to reassure them that the quality of the Lumix far surpassed the 5D. It wasn't until after the first take when I showed them the rushes that they were blown away and trusted that I wasn't some crazy guy pretending to be a filmmaker."



HACKING THE PANASONIC GH2

Corrie and his crew also chose to employ the Driftwood hack, which is a not-from-the-factory tweak that fundamentally changes the performance of the camera..."The Driftwood hack allowed us to shoot AVCHD intra at 176Mbits," he says. "Also, with the workflow side of things, we had pro-res 422 HQ that I would say rivals RED all the time in terms of value for money. After testing out a variety of hacks we felt that the Driftwood option best suited the look of our film. It gave us the earthy, raw feel that we wanted. Especially shooting outdoors in the mountains and woodlands, it gave the whole film an eerie atmosphere."

That said, does he think inexperienced filmmakers are wise to head down the road of hacking their own cameras? "I think inexperienced filmmakers should always try and push boundaries," reckons Corrie. "There is a reason that manufacturers don't put hacks as standard on these kits. Some are risky and unreliable but, if you do your homework, there are some great forums online where you can get some great advice from fellow filmmakers. If you're planning on shooting a film using a hack, always do test shoots before the actual filming takes place. This way you can see what the hack does, how the workflow changes. Do you need better cards? Is the hack reliable? If you do the proper research about a hack then there's no reason why you shouldn't give them a go. We shot for just under a month in total on Wandering Rose with the Driftwood hack and we didn't have a single problem with it."

There are pros and cons for considering a hack, but often such a tweak can boost performance and allow you to do lots of other things that your humble camera might not normally be capable of... "Having the hack on the Lumix gave our film a quality that we never thought in a million years we could have achieved," notes Corrie. "Whilst editing the film, cinematographer friends have seen rushes and have been blown away with the look of the Raw images, even before colour correction. People automatically assume we have spent a fortune on a RED system and are always astounded when we tell them we shot it on an £800 camera. The only downside to a hack is that, that is exactly what it is, a hack. There are always going to be risks when downloading a hack. As I said before, there is a reason that manufacturers don't have these settings on the cameras as standard. But, if you take the time to do the proper research and always be sure to carry out a test shoot then I don't see any problem with hacking a camera. If it looks like you have spent an extra couple of grand on your project, then why the hell not do it?"







Lending extra weight to the appeal of the Lumix GH2 was its capacity for adding on a variety of different lenses. “We used a whole host of different lenses on Wandering Rose,” he elaborates. “My favourite lens was the Voigtlander Nokton 25mm f0.95. This is a super-fast glass lens and was perfect for scenes in low light and gave the film a stunning look. We also took with us a Magic Hyperprime 12mm, 50mm f1.7 Prime via a PK Mount adaptor. Finally, we took a standard Panasonic 14-42mm kit lens, which was perfect for autofocus shots and shots on the slider.”

The great outdoors

The Panasonic certainly got put through its paces in the wide open spaces of Scotland where Wandering Rose was filmed. It was well suited to the conditions, according to the filmmaker... “Shooting so much of the film outdoors meant we needed a camera that would survive the elements,” he says. “The perfect test for us was about two months before the shoot we were filming a running competition called Tough Guy. In this race, athletes would compete through mud, water, fire and a 50ft obstacle course and we had to be in the thick of it. We took the Lumix on this job. If it could survive that, then it could survive three weeks in Scotland. It was totally fine and the shots looked great. The only real issue we had on location was during timelapse shots on top of mountains in Scotland. The wind was so strong and the camera is so light that we had to hold down the tripod with weights so that it didn’t fall over.”

Similarly, the crew also had to boost the audio side of things so that they ended up with a soundtrack that wasn’t ruined due to the challenging conditions delivered by the great outdoors... “Soundwise we had to be really versatile,” reckons Corrie. “We were shooting in such a variety of locations we needed to have the right kit. Low-budget features always fall at the sound hurdle. I didn’t want this to be the case with Wandering Rose. Kitwise, we took a Tascam DR-40, which is a handheld 4-track recorder. The Tascam has XLR inputs for our sound mixer as well as two pin mics and we also used a Sennheiser MKH416 microphone attached to a boom.”

Filming in the middle of nowhere presented additional challenges, however, mainly in the fact that any kit needed to be carried to most locations. As a result, additional hardware was carefully selected... “We kept our kit to a minimum, only taking exactly what we needed,” reflects the filmmaker. “However, one of the essential pieces of kit that we











couldn't have shot without was the Kamerar slider. It's amazing how just adding a little movement to a shot adds so much production value. We also took two 1x1 LED light panels. These were perfect for this kind of shoot. They were lightweight, easy to use and ran off a pair of IDX batteries, so we didn't need any generators when out on locations. We also shot primarily using a custom-built rig, using mainly LanParte components. We didn't take a matte box to keep bulk down. We also took a Manfrotto tripod, but mainly used it for timelapse shots."



The GH2 was perfect for shooting outdoors

Doing it differently

Typically, in a scenario which many a filmmaker encounters along the way, there was also equipment they wished they taken, but didn't... "A decent field monitor would have been useful," adds Corrie. "The one we had contained a battery that lasted for about 10 minutes once not on charge. This wasn't a huge issue as I was behind the camera for a lot of the shoot but, as a director, it's quite frustrating when you have your cinematographer behind the lens and you can't see what he's shooting. Luckily, I've worked with James for years and I know he's perfectly capable of getting the shots needed. It just took time afterwards checking the shots over before we could move on."

Most of us have aspirations to own the next best thing as we climb up the filmmaking ladder, so it's hard to resist asking Corrie what he might choose if budget were no option for his next project... "If I'd had an unlimited budget and could get hold of any piece of kit it would have been just a bunch more lenses and lights," reckons the filmmaker.

"We used a whole host of different lenses on Wandering Rose. My favourite lens was the Voigtlander Nokton 25mm f0.95" - Corrie Greenop



"Because we were shooting a lot of the scenes in a camper van, we had such limited space that we couldn't really fit anything else in there. I think an unlimited budget would have changed the whole dynamic of the shoot and the way we shot everything. Time needs to become your best friend rather than your enemy. You don't want money to hinder you in the creative process. Use what you can. Just go out and shoot with anything you can get your hands on. Don't make excuses why you can't film. Think of reasons why you can, and make it happen." ■



NEW KIT REVIEWS

CANON EOS 1200D

This new Canon entry-level DSLR boasts full HD video and a larger screen

All of the major camera manufacturers like to keep their entry-level DSLR cameras refreshed and as up to date as possible and that means beefier specifications come along all the time. That ensures that the beginners on a budget often gain access to features many of us could only dream of a few years ago. The latest camera to hit Canon's entry-level line-up is the 1200D and it's a great example of how these new models can quickly overtake their outgoing counterparts.

If you're a video newbie then the 1200D is a very small and beginner-friendly camera, offering the barest minimum of manual settings to help ease the user into the process of more control. Inside the delicious design is an 18-megapixel APS-C-sized sensor, a DIGIC 4 processor and the ability to shoot videos in full HD resolution at a number of different frame rates. Around the back of the 1200D there is a good-on-the-eyes 460k-dot LCD screen. However, for those that want a better picture, there is also an HDMI output for connecting up to a TV. The ISO ability of the 1200D reaches up to 12800, but is limited to 6400 in movie mode. Nevertheless, this is a nice piece of kit for a very respectable price.

VERDICT

The 1200D is at the very bottom of the Canon DSLR line-up and it is therefore unfair to expect anything too special from it in terms of movie making potential. That said, the sensor and processing power of the 1200D is easily comparable to those models from the pro-DSLR range of years gone by so it's got an awful lot of potential. Granted, the omission of any external microphone jack could be a dealbreaker for some, despite impressive manual audio level and movie exposure mode options.

Price £349.99
Web www.canon.co.uk





ZACUTO Z-FINDER FOR C300/C500

An optical viewfinder developed specifically for the Canon cinema camera range

Zacuto has long been a popular option for anyone on the lookout for a DSLR optical viewfinder and their Pro range now caters for the Canon C300 and C500, which boosts the brand appeal even further. Canon cinema cameras have been a really big hit with a whole variety of filmmakers and Zacuto has pretty much been on top of this trend since the C100. To ensure the Z-Finder could gel well with the C300 and C500, Zacuto created a number of accessories, including a dedicated mount, a new handle plus a quirky concept helmet that attaches to the camera body for multiple attachment options.

Included with the Z-Finder are four interchangeable anti-fog glass diopters. These range from 0, +1, +2 and +3, which allows you to correct the Z-Finder to your vision right out of the box. That's a hugely practical asset to have at your disposal. Zacuto also reports that -1 and +4 adapters will also be available should you need them, broadening the appeal still further. In addition, the Z-Finder comes with a standard 1.8x magnification, which is great for viewing your scene, but even better for fine-tuning your focus.

VERDICT

The Z-Finder attaches to the LCD screen using a foam padded sleeve that simply slides over the top and clamps in place. Due to the nature of the C300 and C500 monitors, Zacuto has also developed a unique monitor lock clip to keep the LCD screen from moving forward when the Z-Finder is pressed firmly against your eye. This quick release operation makes it ideal for a collapsible and adjustable set-up and the addition of smart design features like the anti-fog glass make it ideal for use in all environments. This is going to be another success story we think.

Price TBC
Web www.zacuto.com



SONY A6000

Sony's new mirrorless camera features full HD video and currently the world's fastest autofocus



Here to replace the NEX6, the A6000 is Sony's latest introduction into the mirrorless camera market. And, if its predecessor is anything to go by, the A6000 will take the market by storm offering dazzling performance via a beefy specification that should help futureproof it for quite some time to come.

The A6000 has an impressive 24-megapixel APS-C sized sensor and uses a Bionz X processor to churn through those large files that you're likely to be producing during your video shoots. One thing immediately stands out - it's a very compact camera, following in the footsteps of models from the NEX range and also keeps buttons to a minimum but design at the forefront. The A6000's highlight feature comes in the form of its new autofocus set-up, which gives it 179 phase detection points, allowing it to retain focus while tracking a subject wherever they happen to be located in the frame.

When it comes to the quality of video then the A6000 can shoot at a maximum resolution of 1080/60p, with a number of other options to choose from. The cool-looking camera records sound with a built-in stereo microphone too. The downside on that front is that there's no external microphone or headphone port, making the sound recording capabilities very limited. That's a rather unfortunate oversight in our opinion.

VERDICT

The A6000 from Sony looks to be a worthy competitor in the compact system camera range, offering some excellent features and an elegant design. Unfortunately though, when it comes to video production, the A6000 isn't going to win any awards. There's an annoying lack of any real audio or exposure control. However, it can shoot in full HD resolution, has a crystal clear tilting LCD screen, Wi-Fi capabilities and Sony's popular E-mount lens mount but it could do with some additional refinements before long.

Price £550
Web www.sony.co.uk





GENUS MINI JIB

A truly portable and collapsible jib system for the travelling filmmaker

Camera jibs offer unique viewing angles and help deliver smooth motion to your shots allowing you to boost the appeal of your footage. At the same time, they are typically very large and heavy pieces of equipment, which can sometimes mean they're left out of your kit arsenal when you're shooting on location. With this in mind, Genus has introduced their latest innovation, the Mini Jib.

Weighing in at just 1.25kg and boasting a collapsible length of just 84cm, the Mini Jib is small enough to carry with you but at the same time light enough so that you won't want to leave it behind. Don't let the name fool you though, the Mini Jib has a maximum operating length of 180cm, along with a maximum height of 187cm and that should give it enough reach for almost any shot requirement.

Although it's chiefly designed for DSLR cameras, the Mini Jib has a maximum payload of 4.25Kg, so you'll be able to get away with heavier cameras if you wish, although this could affect the stability at longer lengths without the correct counter weights attached. In other words you should proceed with caution on that front.





VERDICT

The Genus Mini Jib really has been designed around portability and works using simple functionality, allowing you to take it anywhere. It utilises a folding hinge system and two twist locks to provide a single collapsible unit, meaning you won't have to bother with a small construction project at each location, giving you more time to focus on capturing your subject. Designed for use with a number of small dumbbells, the Mini Jib can hold anything from a GoPro to a RED Epic. Its feature set includes a built-in spirit level, laser-etched markers, threaded mounts and a dual-pin twist collar system for easy adjustment.

Price TBC
Web www.genustech.tv

AIRDROIDS POCKET DRONE

A compact and foldable multicopter designed to carry your action camera up and away

The ability to take to the skies with our cameras has really become the next big thing. Portable drones that come complete with motors to lift your lens into the air are also becoming more affordable into the bargain. However, the majority of the multi-bladed copters available are very large units, which make it hard to use them when travelling or if you're out on location. This is a problem that the team over at AirDroids instantly related to and so they decided to develop their own unit, the natty little Pocket Drone.

The eye-catching Pocket Drone is designed to carry a relatively small action camera, so its payload isn't hugely substantial. On the plus side though, it folds up to be smaller than a 7-inch tablet, which makes it highly desirable for specific shoots. The cool little gizmo cleverly combines a collapsible frame with folding propellers and the combination of both features allows it to be condensed down to a very manageable size, while also offering a built-in camera mount and landing gear.

Flying the rather funky Pocket Drone is reportedly very simple and easy to learn. Controlling the unit can be done via a dedicated controller, or even through an Android device making it even more appealing to smartphone aficionados. Flight time is said to be up to around 20 minutes in length with a camera mounted on board, although the figure is largely dependent on speed and the prevailing weather conditions. No word on if you need a licence to fly it though.

VERDICT

The Pocket Drone started out as a Kickstarter project and hit its goal within a day, showing there really is a market and a desire for such a portable and user-friendly drone. At present it's in the early stages of production, but intriguing features such as the 'follow me' mode, carbon-fibre construction and that folding design make the Pocket Drone a very interesting prospect. Units should be available in the very near future with a reportedly low price point.

Price TBC
Web www.airdroids.com



PANASONIC LUMIX DMC-GH4

Panasonic introduces 4K capability and more to its latest G series camera



Panasonic's much-loved G range of compact system cameras have long been the tool of choice for many pros and amateurs alike, with each new iteration bringing more and more functionality in an affordable package. However, the most anticipated update has just been officially released because, as we have reported previously, the Panasonic GH4 now comes complete with 4K video capability.

From the outside, the GH4 looks very much like a regular part of the G series and this is no bad thing. In fact, a quick glance at it and you're unlikely to notice much difference whatsoever. All of the familiar features and functions are there, including a vari-angle LCD screen, putting out 1040k-dots of resolution. If this isn't to your liking, the electronic viewfinder has a very large 2360k-dot resolution. Meanwhile, inside the GH4 you'll find a brand new Live MOS sensor that delivers 16.5-megapixels. Serious shooters will be happy to hear Panasonic is really focusing on video capability with this camera and as such has provided both an external microphone and headphone port, with a mini HDMI for video playback too.

VERDICT

Unlike some other cameras, the GH4's 4K resolution isn't a gimmick to boost sales. The GH4 can shoot serious 4K quality at 30/25/24fps at 100Mbps, with a cinema-style widescreen resolution also available at 24p. By doing this, Panasonic looks to have a clear idea of where the market is heading. Although there is no pricing structure as of yet, it's fairly safe to say that this will be an affordable model in comparison to what it offers, which is essentially bringing broadcast quality video to a much wider audience.

Price TBC
Web www.panasonic.com



CINEVATE DUZI SLIDER

A lightweight portable camera slider for fuss-free motion capture during video shoots

The Duzi Slider from Cinevate has clearly been designed and developed with portability in mind. It measures just over 60cm in length and weighs just a little over 1.5Kg, making it ideal for taking with you out into the field. After all, there's nothing worse than having to lug heavy equipment to inhospitable places, so in that respect the portability of this gizmo is sure to find a lot of takers.



Constructed using 15mm carbon rails, CNC machined aluminium and precision bearings, the Duzi looks to be a very hard wearing bit of kit that should stand the test of time. And, because of this great construction, it is also able to take a payload of up to 35Kg and that should see it able to handle pretty much any camera system out there. From a practical perspective, mounting the Duzi is a simple task too - simply use the 1/4-20 threaded hole or the 5/8 inch drilled holes if you wish to call up dual stands and subsequently mount it on a tripod. Alternatively, you can use the adjustable rubber feet to set it straight on the ground.

Overall then, the Duzi looks to be a slider aimed firmly at beginners and quite a few pros into the bargain, who might need a handy bit of kit that causes absolutely no fuss while you're out on a job.



VERDICT

We love the way the Duzi can be mounted in a number of different ways to provide a whole range of dynamic shooting options. It's extremely portable, especially with Cinevate's shoulder carrying strap, and requires almost no setting up to get going straight away. Pricing is yet to be confirmed, but the Duzi is rumoured to come in at the lower end of the market money-wise, which should make it an excellent buy for those looking to add some cinematic quality while keeping firmly on budget.

Price TBC
Web www.cinevate.com

ZOOM H5 HANDY RECORDER

The latest Zoom external audio recorder combines advanced features with impressive usability

Zoom's latest high-quality audio recorder is the new H5, sitting unsurprisingly between the H4 and H6 in the current line-up. The H5 follows very much in the footsteps of the current H6, offering a large amount of functionality, but with a few omissions from the specification in order to keep the cost down. To be honest, if you're a fledgling filmmaker then the missing additional features won't really make a dent in the quality of your latest production either. The H5 features the same interchangeable microphone system and is compatible with the existing line of H6 modules, so it's more than up to the job. However, two of the XLR/TLS combo inputs have been removed and the display has lost its colour, so bear that in mind if you need a higher-end recording solution.



The H5 comes with two inputs for external sources, features a swappable stereo microphone system plus audio gain knobs and also has the benefit of being able to record onto SD memory card. The gadget will initially ship with an XY stereo microphone module that features a built-in shock mount system and a 140dB maximum SPL. However, other microphone attachments are available as well as an adapter that doubles the number of XLR/TLS inputs, all of which makes this new Zoom a very attractive proposition.

VERDICT

Zoom has long been a favourite brand for those needing a reliable external sound recording option. The H5 offers a simple solution to recording your sound, giving you a number of advanced features in a basic and easy to use package. The H5 is certainly going to appeal to those who are looking for the functionality of the H6, but who don't necessarily need all of the bells and whistles that come with the latter device, yet still want to take advantage of that excellent interchangeable microphone system that makes these kit items so versatile in any situation.

Price TBC
Web www.zoom.co.jp



PANASONIC LUMIX GH4 INTERFACE UNIT

Turn your shiny new GH4 into a professional audio and video tool with this cool add-on

With the release of the fantastic looking GH4, which we've been following over the last couple of issues, Panasonic appears to think 4K video functionality isn't enough to get the professionals interested in using it as a serious tool. So, in a bid to make it an even more incredible package, they have now released this rather nifty interface unit alongside it, which pushes the GH4 well into the realms of being a full-on professional video tool.

This neat little box of tricks is designed to attach to the bottom of your GH4 and provides it with the video, audio and power connectivity required to use the camera in professional settings. The Interface Unit has two monaural XLR inputs for line or condenser microphones, while also allowing you to enjoy independent volume control from each of the channels. Along with this impressive functionality there's also an audio level display and +48V of phantom power for each channel. On the video side of things, the Interface Unit has two 3G-SDI connectors and two HD-SDI connectors, and can output quad-link SDI 4K video in 4:2:2 10-bit.

VERDICT

The GH4 is already framing up to be a serious piece of kit for a wide range of filmmakers. With the addition of the Interface Unit, however, it can rival professional-grade cinema cameras thanks to the extra specification boost. The addition of XLR inputs and multiple video outputs will allow the GH4 to sit well with any professional setup and there are even high-end timecode features to boot. Granted, the Interface Unit will more than double the size of your GH4, but at the same time it'll bring an extra level of functionality to the table that we could only previously have dreamt of in a relatively compact camera like this.

Price TBA
Web www.panasonic.co.uk

GIMBALL GUNNER

This new gizmo offers up a new take on gimbal stabilisation by combining it with a shoulder mounted rig

The stabilisation market is overrun with rigs utilising a gimbal system so you'd be right not to be expecting too many surprises from this new offering. What's more, the gimbal is commonly found on handheld stabilisers, which isn't always the most practical or useful way to hold a camera setup. The Gimball Gunner, however, is looking to change the game slightly and has combined a conventional shoulder mounted rig with a brushless gimbal setup to create a rather unique stabilising system.

The Gimball Gunner is constructed using carbon fibre with an aluminium frame, all in the hope of keeping the weight to a minimum. The gimbal system uses two motors and is controlled by a two axis AlexMos controller, which offers firmware update possibilities with an on-board USB port. Furthermore, the handles have been developed to use integrated controls in order to focus, removing the need to take your hands away from the stabiliser. The total weight of the Gimball Gunner is just under 4kg and the maximum loading capacity is a similar weight, so it makes for a great little package.



VERDICT

The Gimball Gunner is a very interesting stabiliser, removing the need to hold the camera out in front of you to take advantage of a brushless gimbal system. Placing the weight over your shoulder allows for a more even spread of weight, enabling you to focus on using your hands for controlling the camera angle and movement. The Gimball Gunner is currently a made to order item and is customised for specific camera models.

Web www.facebook.com/gimballgunner





ATOMOS NINJA BLADE

A shiny new HDMI version of the Samurai Blade means that Atomos is likely to have another hit on its hands

Atomos has made a huge impact in the external recorder market in recent years and their constant updating of the range and the firmware keeps them a company to watch out for. Released at BVE in London recently was the new Atomos Ninja Blade. Much like the Samurai Blade, this Pro Res and DNxHD recorder has a stunning 1280 x 720 5-inch SuperAtom IPS touchscreen, running at 325ppi with 179-degree off viewing angle. Those are pretty amazing specs. It's also the brightest screen we've ever seen on this kind of device. In fact, it's one of the only screens which is both of a high enough quality and brightness to be suitable as your main monitor whilst shooting outside.

The Ninja Blade is basically an HDMI version of the Samurai Blade. It has the same excellent software giving you a multitude of shooting aids. These include: Luma Overlay, RGB Parade, Vectorscope with zoom, False Colour, Blue only, Focus Peaking with multiple levels and colours plus Zebras 0 – 100%. There's also been a lot of thought given to the storage and file naming too. You can capture 10Bit 4.2.2. ProRes in all the various flavours, from LT to HQ. There's also the option of using DNxHD if you prefer. You can name the unit so that the files are tagged with which recorder they were recorded on and you can also set the date/time, scene, shot and take. This makes finding the right shots in the edit a breeze.

As with all the Atomos recorders, the Ninja Blade uses the same standard 2.5-inch drives mounted in their custom caddies supplied with the Ninja. They also supply a USB3 dock, a battery, charger, car charger, mains adapter and battery adapters to allow you to use Canon or Nikon batteries.

VERDICT

In short, the Atomos Ninja Blade is a killer proposition as outlined in the review above. What's more, it all comes in a rather nice and solid hardcase. This is a cool item of kit that's definitely one to check out in order to get footage direct from the sensor on your DSLR or camcorder with a clean HDMI output.

Price £595
Web www.atomos.com

BOWENS COMODO ORBIT

Shoot footage fast by utilising this unique twin-grip system for capturing films in a single take

The Comodo Orbit is a newly designed handheld rig that offers a unique way to stabilise your footage. The design is based around a patented twin-grip setup, which makes it easy to shoot a scene in a single fluid movement, giving the effect that the camera is flying around your subject or scene. That's because a major advantage of a two-handed operation is that it allows you to carry your camera for longer without introducing operator fatigue.



The twin-grip setup of the Comodo Orbit really shows its true potential when used with more than one operator. Having an extra pair of grips available means you are able to pass the camera between operators without having to stop the film. So, for example, this can be an easy way of passing the camera through a window or around an obstacle without it being apparent during the film, effectively making the Comodo Orbit capable of single shot filmmaking. Impressive stuff.

VERDICT

A clever bit of kit that's designed to be integrated with almost any size camera. The camera is mounted underneath the main frame, which can be adjusted in a number of ways to suit your setup and carrying style. However, it's the twin-grip system where the Comodo Orbit will prove its real worth, allowing dynamic shots to be captured that would otherwise not be possible with a more conventional arrangment.

Price £999
Web www.comodorigs.com



SANDISK EXTREME PRO 128GB CF CARD

A sizeable no-compromise CompactFlash memory card for the professional user

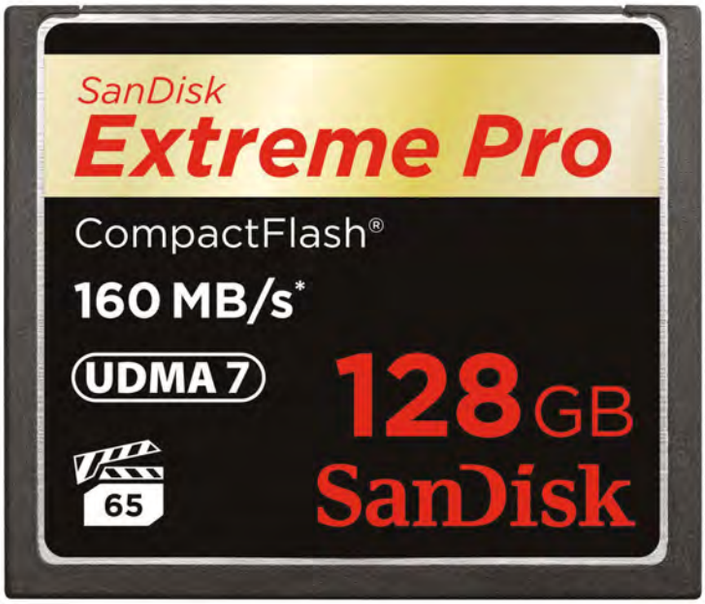
SanDisk has long been a big player in the memory market, providing market-leading solutions for all types of memory cards. At the top of its CompactFlash card line-up sits the new Extreme PRO range of cards, designed for professionals and serious amateurs who need to get the most out of their storage. The Extreme PRO range of CompactFlash cards can achieve very fast write speeds, with this particular 128GB version being capable of speeds up to 160MB/s. With the ability to hold up to 160 minutes of full HD video, the 128GB version therefore really is the professional's tool of choice. It's not cheap, but it'll be worth its weight in gold if it keeps your footage safe and secure, no matter what.

The name Extreme doesn't simply refer to the write speeds. SanDisk has designed this range of cards to be used almost anywhere. Each card has an RTV silicon coating and is tested to provide extensive protection for stress, shock and vibrations. The cards are also designed to perform as normal in conditions of -25 to +85 degrees Celsius, which should mean that you can keep getting that great footage pretty much anywhere you're planning to go.

VERDICT

The Extreme range of compact flash cards make the ideal memory companion for the professional, whether you're shooting in the desert or the Antarctic. The ability to carry 128GB of storage in a single card is ideal for anyone recording in 4K and full HD. You certainly won't need to continuously change memory for each shot, while write speeds of up to 160Mbps means you won't be slowed down by your card either. Impressive stuff.

Price £782.66
Web www.sandisk.co.uk





REALLY RIGHT STUFF GOPRO CAGE

Introduce a range of mounting options to your GoPro without adding size or weight

There are already a number of different GoPro cages available on the market and, it has to be said, some are better than others. However, with the release of the most recent GoPro Hero 3+, the folks over at Really Right Stuff have decided to develop a cage specifically for the new edition, utilising the new smaller housing that comes with this latest model to make a modular cage system for your prized filming possession.

The natty RRS Cage replaces the need for the existing back door of the GoPro housing, delivering a unique way of mounting the camera. This makes it very easy to simply remove the camera, change a battery or replace a memory card. Elsewhere, the outside of the cage is fitted with 24 ¼-inch screws, making it ideal for mounting a whole range of accessories, while also offering mounting options for the RRS standard clamps and compact X-Jaw Clamp system. The cage is also entirely modular and it's also possible to purchase each component separately too.

VERDICT

This is a useful tool if you're serious about GoPro video. It offers protection and a variety of mounting options for you to get the most out of your camera. However, due to the introduction of the latest version, the RRS cage is not backwards compatible with older GoPro housing units. As well as this, you will need to transfer the original housing door seal to the RRS unit in order to retain the waterproof aspect of the camera.

Price TBC
Web www.reallyrightstuff.com

DELL P2815Q ULTRA HD 4K

Enjoy stunning 4K resolution within your daily workflow with this affordable 28-inch monitor

Crisp and clear 4K definition is fast becoming the go-to resolution for all professional films and with more and more cameras being capable of this high-quality output, it's more important than ever to have a workflow system that can handle it. The Dell P2815Q is a 4K-resolution monitor that's clearly been designed to be an affordable introduction to high-end computer displays. It has a beefy native resolution of 3840 x 2160, which is four times the resolution of full HD. This can allow you to maximise the real estate of your monitor and run multiple programs without having to compromise on the pixels you're assigning to each window. That's a definite boon if you're trying to stay productive ad keep the money rolling in.

The P2815Q can be adjusted to suit your required viewing angle, featuring a stand that allows you to rotate the screen by some 90-degrees, giving you the option of a horizontal or vertical screen. As far as inputs go, the monitor comes well tooled-up with HDMI, DisplayPort, Mini DisplayPort, 4 USB 3.0 ports and more besides, allowing you the flexibility to connect the screen up to any number of sources.

VERDICT

The Dell P2815Q looks to be an excellent introduction into the world of 4K and it has a lot to shout about. However, it's hard to get away from the maximum refresh rate of 30Hz. This means you might experience some lagging with certain things when using the monitor. This lower frame rate won't affect most video work due to the majority of movies and shows being filmed at 30fps or under. Nevertheless, for those using the monitor for anything high-speed, it may be worthwhile investing in something with a higher refresh rate.

Price TBC
Web www.dell.co.uk





SANDISK EXTREME PLUS 64GB MICROSD CARD

A new card range that offers lots of storage plus fast read and write speeds along with reliable performance

Another new addition to the SanDisk line-up of memory cards comes in the form of this microSD card and it forms another part of the well-respected Extreme range. As a member of the built-for-anything Extreme range, you can expect to find professional levels of performance for full HD recording and playback, with quick transfer speeds to get your footage ready for editing as soon as you get back to base. With a storage capacity of 64GB on this particular sample, we found you can comfortably record decent chunks of your video without needing to swap memory cards and, as a result, interrupt shooting.

Better still, the latest collection of memory cards from the SanDisk stable has ensured they are able to keep on performing at their best in any given situation. The Extreme PLUS microSD card is waterproof, X-ray proof, temperature proof and shockproof, making it capable of continuing on in temperatures from -13 to +185 degrees Fahrenheit. This new crop of microSD cards is therefore ideal for using absolutely anywhere, and makes the perfect companion for your action camera.

VERDICT

As always, SanDisk is pushing the boundaries of what to expect from portable storage. We are now able to carry more memory than ever, while increasing the potential write speeds to keep up with the higher resolutions and faster frame rates provided from our cameras. The Extreme PLUS microSD card is the ideal tool for phones, tablets and cameras. However, its waterproof and shockproof nature will prove its weight in gold when it comes to partnering up with your chosen action camera.

Price £99.15
Web www.sandisk.co.uk

BLACKMAGIC PRODUCTION CAMERA 4K

Blackmagic Design increases their impressive line-up with what they are calling the world's most portable 4K digital film camera

Adding to the current crop of 4K cameras from Blackmagic Design, the new Blackmagic Production Camera 4K is being cited by the manufacturer as the world's most portable 4K digital film camera. The Super 35-size sensor allows you to shoot Ultra HD TV or 4K feature films, combining a global shutter with a precision EF mount for high-quality lossless compression in CinemaDNG, Raw and Apple ProRes 422.

The camera itself is nicely constructed using machined aluminium to ensure quality and durability, all while keeping portability firmly in mind. Built into the camera is the ability to record uncompressed audio straight to ProRes files, allowing you to remove the need for external devices and time-consuming syncing in post-production. Recording straight onto a removable SSD, you can expect to film around 72 minutes of footage onto a 480GB drive. Around the back of the camera you'll find a neat 5-inch touchscreen that gives you access to menus and settings, as well as the ability to enter metadata. It's an absolute doddle to use too.

VERDICT

Sitting at the top of the Blackmagic line-up, the Production Camera looks to be a worthy tool for professionals who need to take Ultra HD footage in a variety of locations, showing that a truly excellent camera doesn't have to be large and cumbersome. The popular and proven EF optics collection means that it's easy to switch between systems. And, the inclusion of a number of common outputs ensures you won't need to spend extra on dedicated cables. The handling could be an issue for some, but on a good rig this should become less of a problem.

Price £1,925
Web www.blackmagicdesign.com



FOTODIOX WONDERRIG ELITE

A simple and very affordable all-in-one shoulder rig



The WonderRig Elite is a simple shoulder mounted rig designed to offer maximum stability to your shots, while at the same time allowing you to be comfortable and mobile. The rig is based around a very conventional setup that boasts a large shoulder plate to support the weight of your camera, with two handles up front to balance and control its movement. The WonderRig also utilises an industry-standard design, incorporating 15mm rail rods for easy accessory mounting and a 1/4-inch mounting base plate. That, thankfully, means you shouldn't be faced with any unwanted surprises when setting up for the first time.

Better still, unlike some other shoulder rigs, the WonderRig Elite looks to give you everything you need to get out there shooting, without the need to purchase additional accessories. As a part of the package you get a reversible follow focus to mount on either side of the lens, adjustable lens gear belt along with a three-sided matte box.

Adding to the overall appeal is the fact that it's fully adjustable, making it ideal for any number of camera setups. Impressively, each component can be easily removed, meaning you can change how you use the rig and subsequently dismantle it for travel and storage.

VERDICT

The WonderRig Elite is a relatively inexpensive purchase, especially when you consider the components that come with it. It offers a very basic way of mounting your camera on your shoulder, while giving you the ability to get out and shoot without the need for anything else. While it may not be ideal for full-time professional use, the metal construction looks durable enough for the amateur filmmaker. Plus, the simplicity of the rig design makes it great for on-the-go shooting moments.



Price £249.95
Web www.fotodioxpro.com

NEXT ISSUE

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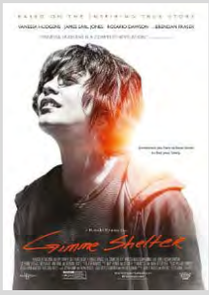
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WHAT'S HOT?

The team singles out current and forthcoming indie movies plus documentaries that are creating a buzz!

Gimme Shelter

A desperate pregnant teenager runs away from her abusive mother in search of her estranged father and a brighter future, only to be rejected by him and forced to live on the streets until a friendly stranger crosses her path and offers new hope.



Directors Ron Krauss
UK Release 2014
Language English
Duration 101 minutes
UK Certification TBC

50 Kisses

50 Kisses is a feature film made up of fifty different stories directed by the same amount of directors, all with one thing in common; a Valentine's Day kiss. Featuring a plethora of unlikely characters from cuddly toys to love-struck zombies.



Director Various
UK Release Feb 2014
Language English
Duration 89 minutes
UK Certification 15

The Pretty One

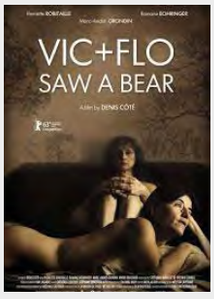
A tragedy presents Laurel with the chance to live her life as her once-perfect twin sister. As she gets herself deeper into a web of lies, she must decide between continuing with her deceit or revealing herself as the imposter that she really is.



Directors Jenée LaMarque
UK Release 2014
Language English
Duration 90 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Vic + Flo saw a Bear

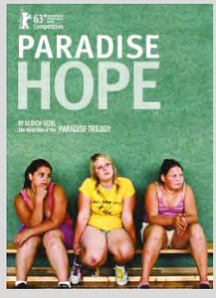
Two female ex-cons attempt to make a new life for themselves in suburban Quebec, but their former criminal lives keep coming back to haunt them in the form of one of the locals, who has a mysterious connection to their dark pasts.



Director Denis Côté
UK Release 2014
Language French
Duration 95 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Paradise: Hope

The third film in Ulrich Seidl's Paradise trilogy tells the story of Melanie, the daughter of Teresa (Paradise: Love), as she attends a strict diet camp within the Austrian countryside, run by a 40-year-old doctor whom she falls in love with.



Director Ulrich Seidi
UK Release 2013
Language German
Duration 92 minutes
UK Certification 15

Almost Human

A man mysteriously disappears from his home, where his friend is the last person to see him alive. Two years later a series of horrific murders leads his friend, Seth to believe that he has returned from the dead and is being driven by an evil force.



Director Joe Begos
UK Release 2014
Language English
Duration 80 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Roulette

Three people who have reached rock bottom in their lives come together in a therapy meeting held in a secluded house. They question each others reasons for being there and subsequently plan on ending it all with a game of Russian Roulette.



Director Erik K. Myers
UK Release 2014
Language English
Duration 113 minutes
UK Certification TBC

C.O.G

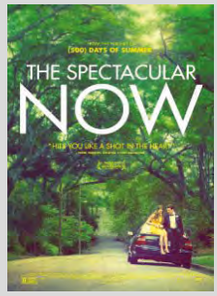
A confident young Yale graduate travels to Oregon in an attempt to start a new life working on an apple farm. Once there, he soon finds that rubbing shoulders with the working-class man leaves him feeling misguided and bewildered.



Director Kyle P. Alvarez
UK Release 2014
Language English, Spanish
Duration 88 minutes
UK Certification TBC

The Spectacular Now

The Spectacular Now is a coming-of-age college tale of one young man's alcohol addiction and party lifestyle and how it led to the break-up of a once solid relationship but, in turn, was the reason for the blossoming of a whole new one.



Directors James Ponsoldt
UK Release 2014
Language English
Duration 95 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Cold Comes the Night

A cash-strapped motel owner and her daughter are taken hostage one night by a partially blind criminal. He then forces them to be his eyes on a dangerous journey to retrieve some stolen money from a crooked police officer.



Director Tze Chun
UK Release 2013
Language English
Duration 90 minutes
UK Certification 15

The Selfish Giant

A modern tale about two disheartened and unmotivated 13-year-old working-class boys in a small English community. They hope to make ends meet by working with a local scrap dealer and hardened criminal, but he ultimately ends up leading them astray.



Director Clio Barnard
UK Release Oct 2013
Language English
Duration 91 minutes
UK Certification 15

The Green Inferno

A group of young activists travel from New York to the deepest Amazon jungle to save a dying tribe. Their plane crashes en route and they are taken hostage by the same lost tribe they tried to protect. Eli Roth pays homage to the 80s 'video nasty' genre.



Director Eli Roth
UK Release 2014
Language English
Duration 103 minutes
UK Certification 18

I Used to Be Darker

A subtle and deliberately slow-paced film with a memorable soundtrack, I Used to Be Darker focuses on the breakdown of a once happy marriage, then the family's dramatic and emotional journey to adapt to change.



Director Matthew Porterfield
UK Release 2014
Language English
Duration 90 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Everyday

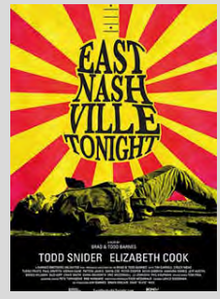
Everyday follows the changing relationship between a man imprisoned for smuggling drugs, his wife and their children. The story is told over the course of five years, and tells the tale from both the family's side and the imprisoned father's.



Director Aleksandr Sokurov
UK Release 2012
Language German
Duration 140 minutes
UK Certification TBC

East Nashville Tonight

Two brothers set out to make a film promoting musicians from their neighbourhood, but alcohol and drugs take over and the result is a documentary torn between the films original intent and home-made comedy



Director Brad Barnes, Todd Barnes
UK Release 2014
Language English
Duration 85 minutes
UK Certification TBC

American Promise

Two American filmmakers follow their son and his best friend over 12 years. As the paths of the two boys diverge, one continues private school while the other follows a very different route through the public education system.



Directors Joe Brewster, Michele Stephenson
UK Release 2014
Language English
Duration 135 minutes
UK Certification 15

The Armstrong Lie

Director Alex Gibney set out to make a documentary about Lance Armstrong's improbable return to cycling in 2008. However, after the allegations of drug use and eventual public confession, what came out was a very different film.



Director Alex Gibney
UK Release January 2014
Language English
Duration 124 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Twice Born

Twice Born is a dual-plotline film set during the Bosnian conflict. It tells the story of Gemma's past and present life revolving around her now grown son and her past relationship with Diego as it evolved and then ended amidst the Sarejevo crisis.



Director Sergio Castellitto
UK Release 2014
Language English, Italian
Duration 127 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Big Bad Wolves

A series of bloody murders in a small town brings three unlikely characters together; the father of a victim, a maverick detective, operating outside of the law and the main suspect in the killings, a local school teacher.



Directors Aharon Keshales, Navot Papushado
UK Release 2013
Language Hebrew
Duration 110 minutes
UK Certification 18

Cut to Black

A disgraced former NYPD police officer is called upon by an old friend from the force to help him track down and capture his estranged daughter's stalker in an attempt to win back a place in her life, but there is a price to pay.



Director Dan Eberle
UK Release 2014
Language English
Duration 90 minutes
UK Certification TBA

Instructions Not Included

An ex-playboy and unlikely father-figure is left with a daughter as her mother flees the country. Now, six years on, his relationship with his daughter is threatened by her mother's unexpected return.



Director Eugenio Derbez
UK Release 2014
Language English, Spanish
Duration 122 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Downloaded

Downloaded is a documentary that explores the download revolution. We hear from the pioneers of the technology, the businesses and bands that have been affected and, of course, the consumers of an innovation that has changed the world.



Director Alex Winter
UK Release 2013
Language English
Duration 106 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Out of the Furnace

When a young man mysteriously goes missing and the local police force begin to give up hope, his frustrated older brother, Russell (Christian Bale), takes the law into his own hands in an attempt to find justice for his troubled sibling.



Directors Scott Cooper
UK Release January 2014
Language English
Duration 116 minutes
UK Certification 15

The ABCs of Death

Some 26 filmmakers were given a budget of $5,000 each, a letter of the alphabet and told to make a short film. The result is a very unique and grizzly anthology of tales covering all genres of film, but all having one thing in common; a death scene.



Director Various
UK Release 2013
Language English
Duration 123 minutes
UK Certification 18

Go For Sisters

Go For Sisters follows Bernice, a woman in search of her son in a seedy underworld. She turns to an old friend and an ex-cop to help her search the Mexican border, rife with drug deals, a corrupt police force, human smuggling and gun violence.



Director John Sayles
UK Release 2014
Language English, Spanish
Duration 123 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Museum Hours

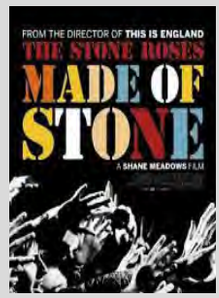
A tale of a Canadian tourist and a patrolman at Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum, as they forge a platonic relationship over their shared love of art. A sophisticated film with factual documentary-like transitions about the art in the museum.



Director Jem Cohen
UK Release 2013
Language English
Duration 107 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Made of Stone

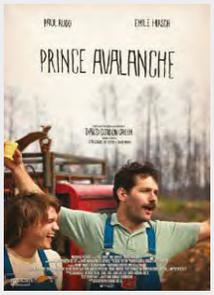
Shane Meadows takes time out of production for This is England 90 to document the reunion of the iconic British band, The Stone Roses. It's a revealing insight into the band, culminating with the 2012 Heaton Park gig to a 220,000 strong crowd.



Director Shane Meadows
UK Release June 2013
Language English
Duration 97 minutes
UK Certification 15

Prince Avalanche

It's the summer of 1988 and two highway road workers escape to the country to get away from city life. The new green landscape becomes a place of misadventure as the men find themselves in conflict with each other and the women they left behind.



Director David G. Green
UK Release October 2013
Language English
Duration 94 minutes
UK Certification 15

Afternoon Delight

Pretty housewife Rachel and her husband try to salvage their dwindling sexless marriage by visiting a strip club. There, Rachel meets an intimate young woman named McKenna, a stripper she soon invites into her lacklustre life and family home.



Director Jill Soloway
UK Release 2014
Language English
Duration 95 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Electrick Children

A modern-day tale of teenage pregnancy and an immaculate conception. A young girl believes she has become pregnant by powers beyond her control, while her deeply religious family believe her condition to be the result of an unforgivable act.



Director Rebecca Thomas
UK Release 2012
Language Spanish
Duration 96 minutes
UK Certification 15

Populaire

Set in France in 1958, Rose is not happy with her humble surroundings and the prospect of an unhappy marriage, so she escapes to Normandy to become a secretary for a very handsome and wealthy boss. Once there, she discovers a hidden talent.



Directors Régis Roinsard
UK Release 2013
Language French, English
Duration 111 minutes
UK Certification 12

Ride With Larry

Ride With Larry is a documentary that brings you closer to the day-to-day fight against Parkinson's disease through the fascinating story of Larry Smith, a retired US policeman, now turned small-town baker.



Directors Andrew Rubin and Ricardo Villarreal
UK Release TBC
Language English
Duration 90 minutes
UK Certification TBC

We Are What We Are

A reclusive family is struck by tragedy after an unprecedented storm moves in, leaving two sisters, Iris and Rose, to fend for themselves and hide the family's dark history as neighbours and the authorities try to intervene.



Director Jim Mickle
UK Release Oct 2013
Language English
Duration 105 minutes
UK Certification 18

BEST OF THE REST...

Releases by inspirational filmmakers that may have passed you by

Gigantic

A miserable bed salesman finds his future plans to adopt a Chinese baby put on hold when Happy, an attractive young customer, walks into his shop and changes his life when she falls asleep on a display bed.



Director	Matt Aselton
Year	2008
Language	English
Duration	98 minutes
UK Certification	15

The House of the Devil

Set in the 1980s, a college student accepts a strange babysitting job on the night of a rare full lunar eclipse. She soon comes to the realisation that her clients are devil worshippers and plan to use her in a satanic ritual.



Director	Ti West
Year	2009
Language	English
Duration	95 minutes
UK Certification	18

Gasland

Filmmaker Josh Fox delves deep into the controversial subject of hydraulic fracturing by revealing how a leaking well can contaminate natural resources while releasing dangerous methane into the Earth's atmosphere.



Director	Josh Fox
Year	2010
Language	English
Duration	107 minutes
UK Certification	NA

Black Snake Moan

A strange God-fearing musician takes a vulnerable, sex-crazed girl hostage in the hope that she will become his companion, but when her boyfriend returns from the army he sets out to kill her misunderstood captor.



Director	Craig Brewer
Year	2006
Language	English
Duration	116 minutes
UK Certification	15

Cave of Forgotten Dreams

Documentary maker Werner Herzog gains rare and exclusive access to film the Chauvet caves of Southern France and captures the oldest known works of art and man-made markings that cover the cave walls.



Director	Werner Herzog
Year	2010
Language	English
Duration	90 minutes
UK Certification	NA

Pickman's Muse

An artist, Robert Pickman, is haunted by a relentless series of horrific unworldly visions, revealed to him through a mysterious ancient artefact that he recently discovered in an old abandoned church.



Director	Robert Cappelletto
Year	2010
Language	English
Duration	77 minutes
UK Certification	NA

Cashback

After ending a long-term relationship, a young man develops chronic insomnia, so he takes a job in a 24-hour supermarket to pass the time. There, he meets a range of mysterious and colourful fellow night-owls.



Director	Sean Ellis
Year	2006
Language	English
Duration	90 minutes
UK Certification	15

Humpday

Two friends, Ben and Andrew agree to take their relationship to another level when they agree to get involved in an erotic film experiment, all in the name of art. The only thing stopping them is Ben's wife.



Director	Lynn Shelton
Year	2009
Language	English
Duration	94 minutes
UK Certification	15

Chop Shop

A wise street kid on the verge of adolescence lives and works in a garage on the outskirts of Queens, New York. In this chaotic world of motoring, he struggles to make a better life for himself and his older sister.



Director	Ramin Bahrani
Year	2007
Language	English
Duration	84 minutes
UK Certification	15

Brick

An outcast turned vigilante teenager forces his way into the dangerous underworld of a high school crime syndicate to uncover the circumstances behind the mysterious disappearance of his ex-girlfriend.



Director	Rian Johnson
Year	2005
Language	English
Duration	110 minutes
UK Certification	18

Dogtooth

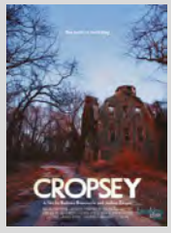
Three children are confined to an old country house by their control-obsessed parents well into adulthood. There, they listen to recordings of the outside world and develop a whole new language for themselves.



Director	Yorgos Lanthimos
Year	2009
Language	Greek
Duration	96 minutes
UK Certification	18

Cropsey

Two filmmakers investigate a 30-year-old mystery surrounding the disappearance of five children on Staten Island. They find that an urban legend they had all heard of as children may be at the centre of the case.



Director	B.Brancaccio, J. Zeman
Year	2009
Language	English
Duration	84 minutes
UK Certification	NA

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